

FURY

EDMUND GOULDING

ia

FURY

By EDMUND GOULDING



A. L. BURT COMPANY

Publishers

New York

Published by arrangement with Dodd, Mead & Company

Printed in U. S. A.

**COPYRIGHT. 1923,
BY DODD. MEAD AND COMPANY, INC.**

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A. BY

**AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO MY MOTHER
AND BABY SISTER**

2084195

FURY

CHAPTER I

HIDING in black nights . . . alone . . . emerging with the sun . . . year in and out . . . *The Lady Spray* rode on, consuming billowy distance with a pride bred of her courage, sex and custom.

Looney Luke well said of her:

“Stormy night, or sunny day,
They’re all the same to *The Lady Spray*.”

Luke loved this ship; he loved the sea; and all men—and God.

He could not even hate his captain, Dog Leyton. He’d said so once, and the crew had laughed. And then Dog Leyton had heard, and he laughed, too.

And is it any matter of wonder that the sea roars with seething laughter as she rolls up on the sands of land to see you and me?

She laughs; and with a swift movement of her body sweeps that fat woman’s fat husband down, under and away. Then, as we stand horrified, she laughs back at us: “Come in, little man, God’s greatest creation!”

Perhaps we do not understand her roaring voice; and so we strut pleasurable back to land and life; to chat, to breed, to cry and laugh, waking and sleeping, working and playing, living and dying, in mansions and mines, developing the human race to the glory of God. Is it any wonder that the sea laughs as she rolls up on the humans' land?

Some of us, perhaps, have heard the sea calling within us—and have thrilled, looking up into truth; and a furious love of life has possessed us . . . and we have laughed with the sea.

But then . . . we have forgotten again, and leaned away from truth.

So, through time, Man's laugh is dying . . . and only the sea can be heard, far down along, curling upon the winding shore . . . seemingly eternal.

Thus Dog Leyton's laugh had died. And Dog Leyton was a captain of the sea. *The Lady Spray* was his ship—had been for thirty years; and she was still as trim a windjamming girlie as you'd want to find. She got a bit saucy sometimes, but ain't that the way with all women?

Dog had been caught up in one of those cyclones of passion, broken vows and lies, which blow only on land; and he'd taken his brooding out to sea, and she, womanlike, had jibed, and laughed, and taunted, until . . .

But then he'd never inspired that tender solace which only the sea can give. On the contrary, he'd never understood the sea. He'd never known the

glorious line of her form, her endless laughter, her passion, her tempestuous moods of play, or her moon-kissed sleep. Bah! To him she was the soup—always the soup! Damn the wash! Damn the wind! Damn the clouds! Damn the endless miles of green distance! . . . Damn God!

And the damn God, with grim humor, had amusedly dabbed on his timeless palette, and detailed Dog Leyton's hating face, while the sea swept her swishing skirts by and smiled serenely up into that face,—the face that hated her, the face with streaks and hollows of mental pain, traced ruthlessly under the seafarer's tan.

The mouth, that seemed never to have smiled, was a thin line. The brows might never have been raised—they seemed to be growing down. He seemed to have been in need, by his outward appearance, of a physical and mental outlet for something smoldering within him.

Four obsessions were his: a ship, his son, a fight and his rum. An ideal master, hard, cruel and quarrelsome, but understood by his crew; and is not understanding the basis of system? And does not system mean a good ship? And *The Lady Spray* was certainly that.

The sea's a man's life anyway, whatever you say. It takes a man to understand her moods and love her and ride her! She is startling in her moods; her smile, when she wakes in the morning—there's nothing like it in the universe; and her rage—God help you, if she is against you! She's attuned to

God, and if you love her and your life is with her and you're as true and as straight as she is, she'll introduce you to him direct as a friend, as a master, and you will need no church.

And through the sea you learn to know yourself and all men. In the boundless mirror of her shining face you get a clearer vision of yourself, and of the things that happen out of the longings and storms and passions, and loves and hates and sins of men. And she makes the drama of it all play before your eyes and you're never lonely. No, you're never lonely, if you play square with the sea, and she likes you well enough to introduce you to her Captain—God. . . .

The sea had always loved Boy—loved him from that memorable night. The wind had teased her all day and kept her awake all the night before. She was letting her pent-up temper go, and the rain and the wind were answering her back. *The Lady Spray* was put to it to keep her nose out of trouble.

The woman aboard was Mrs. Leyton, Dog's wife and as good a seawoman as you would want to find anywhere—poor girl—

Dog Leyton was himself born on the sea and he wanted his child to start the same way. So that's how she happened to ship. The crew took kindly to her and—well, that night there wasn't a man aboard who didn't mumble something or do something unusual, such as men do when they're sighting death—even when it's well to port. And Mrs.

Leyton,—she just sat and trembled, white-lipped and still-eyed.

A gale has always been a good excuse for Dog to take a couple more than usual. Damp affected his rheumatism; and it had often been said that *The Lady Spray* would have kissed Davy Jones long before but for Dog's uncanny sea wit and the ferocious fighting hate of opposition with which a couple of extra rums always endowed him.

When he saw his wife that night, as he came in dripping, saw her sitting there still and white, he called her "yellow," and accused her of transferring her cowardice to the child that was to come.

But she knew her man. She stood up and smiled. She knew her man, drunk or sober. She walked out on top, the rain beating down on her breast.

"Who's a bloody coward?" she screamed. "You want a kid like yourself. All right; we'll make a bullet-head out of him like his—"

Before she could finish *The Lady Spray*, over-hearing, pitched her down, head first, into the scuppers.

It was Morgan, the young first mate, who picked her up and carried her back; it was Morgan, the first mate, who looked Dog Leyton in the eye in a way that the skipper never forgot; it was Morgan who took her burning hand, and whispered gruff comfort in her ear—with a voice that carried in it something that made her open her eyes suddenly, almost forgetting her pain.

Then Mr. Hop, the ship's doctor, entered. . . .

It was just breaking dawn and, like some naughty coquette who has had a spree the night before, the sea lay back smiling, breathless, waiting for a tropical day on which to doze.

The skipper had walked all night, and no more drink had passed his lips. He was sober, morose and ashamed—ashamed to face the woman he loved; ashamed in his soberness to look at her pain-racked face; ashamed to kiss her and ask her to forgive. And Mr. Hop came to him as the first streak of light peeped through the mist.

"It's come, Captain—a boy."

The Captain did not move. He stood there, transfixed and ashamed, as with the first ray of light upon her lips, the sea smiled her welcome to Boy. Dog was ashamed! And at that moment from the cabin, Morgan, the first mate emerged, a queer look upon his face.

And when dawn was full up, Dog Leyton stood over his wife, the woman who had loved him until then; and he looked down on her still, sleeping form; and the face of Boy looked up into his . . . and crinkled and . . . perhaps, smiled . . . forgiving.

CHAPTER II

BOY—Boy Leyton, second mate of *The Lady Spray*, the captain's only son—was a child of the sea, weaned upon her rolling bosom. Her song had sung him to his baby sleep and her soft voice had taught him the only prayers he ever knew. And had he not been fathered by Dog, the roughest, toughest ever?

He had lived up to all that father's expectations, in details of seamanship, diligence and discipline; but in his eyes could be perceived a vague tenderness, a whimsical inquiry.

It was this manifestation of his character which constantly broke the even course of his sea-faring existence by sharp and cruel conflict, for Dog Leyton attributed this strain to the wife, the mother, the woman who after the boy's birth had made life outside his ship a closed book to him, the woman he now hated—who was gone.

It was Boy's revelation of his softer quality, his unspoken hunger for love and sympathy, his innate ability to deal with brutality, with compassion and kindness, which had created the smoldering conflict between father and son—a conflict that foreboded tragedy.

Nor was Boy, although physically hard and brave, understood by the flotsam crew chosen by

Dog Leyton to man *The Lady Spray*. In truth he did not quite understand himself. Violence, vice and blood spelled to him indescribable agony. He was a recluse and a dreamer and yet at times for long periods he would gaze, as if wistfully, out to sea, sublimely oblivious to the life about him.

Yet his immediate sense of humor, the virility with which he attacked his work, his buoyant and laughing attitude towards the crew, proved him Dog Leyton's son, with a pride in who he was, a pride manifested in his stride as second mate. But now and then, when in the very act of imitating his father splendidly, he suddenly would spoil it all by a tender act or word.

Intense and natural, he was a man among men, his very normality automatically high-lighted against the abnormal hardness of the captain, mate and crew. The hardening process to which Boy had been subjected, as persistently prescribed by his father, had failed. His physical perfection was balanced by a certain influence of soul, but he was without subtlety. He took life and individual circumstances exactly as he found them and dealt with them upon natural instincts and impulses.

Therefore Boy was natural, strong, tender and brave; and if one ventured to criticize his moral make-up, one might point to his hypersensitive attitude towards his own tender and truer side, which he had learned to term within himself—his "yellow streak."

CHAPTER III

THE sea lay back, languid, under a hot sun. Her even, contented breathing swayed *The Lady Spray* with a gentle grace. It was like one woman lending another her mirror and *The Lady Spray* smiled quietly to herself. She felt dressed for the afternoon, her decks white and trim and her crew for the moment too hot to shout and sing.

Boy, stretched upon the deck, face down, resting upon his elbows, was talking quietly to Noah, a green and red parrot in a very nice cage.

"G'wan, yuh damn fool," he said politely, urgingly. "D'ye want yer dinner? Do yer?"

A muffled scream from Noah.

Muscles under a brown skin rippled as Boy swung into a sitting position.

"Say 'Minnie, I love you!' Come on, now! 'Min—' "

Noah turned quickly. A third had joined them; a twisted, curious thing, a man with an abnormally large forehead and very blue, transparent eyes.

Boy looked up.

"Blimey, Luke, you try yer 'and; 'e's got to say it proper before port."

Luke smiled. "Suppose Noah says 'I love ye' all day. 'I love ye—I love ye,' and then *you* come

back an' say it; it won't be such new music for Minnie's ears. Wimmen's ears are made to wait for things they like to hear . . . to wait."

Boy scratched his head as the logic of this observation hit him suddenly. A row of white teeth bared spontaneously.

"Luke, ye're right. Ye arn't 'arf a one! She'd be 'earin' this blinkin' fowl all day and when I'd come back from trips—"

A sudden movement from Luke interrupted him. A sheet of paper, sweeping along the deck in a breath of warm wind, had been deftly caught. Luke's blue eyes missed nothing. In a moment he had seen a written phrase or two. He hesitated and quickly handing the paper to Boy, moved away.

With or about Luke, the unusual always happened. It was a moment before Boy looked at the fluttering letter in his hand. Then glancing down, he read, as it had been penned by a crude, heavy hand:

"Dearest Minnie: I been thinking of you all day."

But the paper was rudely snatched from him.

Boy, scrambling to his feet, faced Morgan, the first mate.

Certain temperaments are in natural opposition, certain men are born to face each other, look into each other's eyes and hate; and these two hated with an unspoken, agonizing hate; a sullen, sailors' hate.

Morgan, with his six-feet-three of sinew, his narrowed eyes and lantern jaw, hated Boy; and Boy, though trembling, feared not Morgan but his own insane, surging desire to kill this man who now stood with the paper crushed in his hand, looking down at him, silent but for the hiss of indrawn breath.

Then suddenly another's voice, raucous:

"Get out of it there, Morgan! I called yuh."

Dog Leyton, red-faced, was yelling from the wheel.

"Aye, aye, sir."

Without a word Morgan turned away, the letter still crushed in his hand; and Boy, gazing after him, wondered.

His heart was thumping. He turned. Noah was a dull thing now in the reaction.

Looney Luke watched him and smiled. He saw hidden meanings. No external incident ever brought change to his twisted features. He was Looney Luke, the cooky's mate; he read the stars, he told your fate.

Boy stood beside him now and asked a question, but Looney Luke did not answer. His attention had been attracted elsewhere.

Morgan had taken the wheel. The Skipper leaned heavily on the rail, wiping his forehead. His figure sagged as if physically fatigued. His head turned quickly.

"Did ye speak, Mr. Morgan?"

Morgan did not answer.

The eyes of the older man blazed. The sagging figure stiffened suddenly. A stride and he stood beside Morgan, whose face was averted.

"Were ye mumblin' somethin', Mr. Morgan?"

The other answered suddenly, sullenly, without turning:

"I remarked it wa'n't my watch."

Here it was, an outlet, an excuse. With lightning stimulus it functioned. Leyton's body quivered and his voice thundered: "Are you objectin', Mr. Morgan?"

"No, damn ye, I ain't"; and Morgan swung around, speaking down into the broad, crimson, twitching face, thrust up to him viciously.

Again, one of those unspeakable moments; a moment of hate.

Boy made a movement forward. Luke laid a hand on his arm, restraining him. Together they watched.

Leyton lunged suddenly. Morgan stepped back. The savage impetus of the blow swung the Skipper around against the wheel. The other walked forward fearlessly sneering:

"Ye're Captain, don't forget! Ye're—"

A backhander checked further utterance.

A herculean feat of mental control shook Morgan's huge frame as he stood, a sinister figure, facing an old man, who at that moment slumped, clutching at the wheel.

The Lady Spray nervously fluttered in her course.

Boy with a cry started forward and was again restrained. He knew . . . he knew!

Mr. Hop stood beside Dog Leyton, patting his back briskly.

The old man was gasping for breath, betraying every symptom of apoplectic distress. Morgan watched silently, as the Captain, with an effort, straightened, stood erect, spat and walked away.

Mr. Hop and Morgan exchanged quick glances.

"He'll be killin' some one or himself in one of them fits."

And Mr. Hop, about to reply, started suddenly. Morgan looked with him.

"Get out o' me sight, ye moon-faced calf!"

Together they watched Boy turn slowly away from his father. He had followed only a few steps and in a low voice asked: "Are you all right now, Father?—sir?"

Boy walked to Looney Luke; again he asked a question and again Looney Luke's face was turned away, absorbed.

Boy's gaze followed his to see something that had happened five times before in his fifteen or sixteen years of conscious memories. He spoke, clutching Luke's arm.

"He'll make 'em fight—the mood 'e's in, 'e will! Make 'em fight! An' one of 'em" (his voice lowered to a whisper), "'ll go under. Look!"

It was true. He had told one of the secrets of the sea; a secret carried in the heart of *The Lady*

Spray; his father's law; something that justified vague whispers ashore. Fight it out!

Zeis, the Greek cook . . . some garbage on the deck . . . and Yuka, the burly Russian blonde . . . the skipper between . . . "Who dumped this?" . . . a torrent of foreign words growing louder, shriller, as two sea haters of seven voyages full of smoldering aversion, stood facing each other. Zeis knew the Russian lied—the garbage wasn't from the galley.

A whistle, shrill, penetrating.

"All hands up!"

"A fight—a fight!"

Eyes had been watching. It was the first fight since the giant Lascar, Jumbo, had been brained, two years ago and by this very Zeis . . . Jumbo had died of pneumonia according to Mr. Hop's log.

And now Yuka!

What a fight! . . .

Hoarse shouts and scrambling feet . . .

"The old 'un's gettin' blood mad again . . ."

"Five bob on Zeis!"

"All up!"

And the white decks of *The Lady Spray* suddenly seemed to shudder.

"A chair for the Skipper."

Mr. Hop came forward busily, with a bowl of water and some towels.

"A bigger ring! Give 'em room! Back! Get back, there! Farther!"

"Look at that bloody man, I ask yer. He'll eat 'im!"

Yuka, bared to the waist, his straw mop answering dully to the light, smiled at the speaker. He pawed the ground with a naked horny foot. His knife flamed in the sun. His was the confidence of a giant.

Zeis the Greek, lithe, sparse, still, very still, his thin pointed features unmoving, waited, knife gripped in his steel-like fingers, its blade under his wrist, turned up towards the elbow.

"Silence!"

The Skipper took his seat and unnaturally stuck an unlighted pipe in his mouth.

The sky, blue with flecks of white, looked and whispered to the dozing sea, but only Looney Luke noticed the faint puff of warm interest that stirred *The Lady Spray* uneasily.

"You two wanted this an' now ye've got it, and whatever's the outcome, ye'll govern yerselves and yer tongues accordingly. Ye're all parties to this 'ere scrap. D'ye understand?"

A roar of hoarse "ayes" . . . a rumble of discordant excited voices . . . the rasp of bloody speculation . . . hushed whispers of advice.

"Wait! Stop!"

The Skipper rose and, hand to mouth, shouted: "Boy!"

And Boy, but a dozen paces away behind Number 1 boat, stiffened suddenly. His eyes sought Looney Luke's appealingly and met blankness,

changing to a whimsical smile of cynical encouragement.

"B-O-Y!"

Boy walked forward heavily and Looney Luke gazed after him, the boy he loved . . . and turned his head away.

Why—why was Boy a coward? Why was he yellow . . . this healthy boy—a product of the sea and scared to see a scrap and a good one—why?

Morgan smiled from the wheel as he looked down upon the curious scene before him. It had happened so quickly—but that is the way of the sea. And now look at Boy, that dead-faced brat! The old 'un's makin' him set on the deck by his chair and the old 'un's voice b-i-t-e-s.

Its tremolo of excitement went up and kissed Morgan's ears.

"I said all hands up, Mr. Leyton! Damn ye, can't yer obey? . . . Sit down! . . . Here!"

Morgan smiled again as the crew grinned and Boy, white faced, took his place beside his father.

And at the first breathless "Oh!" as two naked bodies smacked into action, each glistening, sweating, before its blow was struck, Morgan felt himself strangely aloof.

He still retained a spark of ambition. Exactly what that ambition was he didn't know, except, of course, that he wanted to be master of *The Lady Spray*—if the devil would only be kind enough to remove the old man.

He gazed down now at that old man, craning forward in his chair, with eyes like tiny beads of fire, watching—what?

The Russian was down, face upon the deck. Under each shoulder his two hands gripped the two of Zeis, who strained and panted above and bit into the red, crinkled neck beneath a straw mopped head that came back with force enough against his nose to send drops of crimson wet upon writhing shoulders.

And no one knew but they that the knife of Zeis pierced an inch into the fleshy breast pressing against the deck, until it moved in its warm socket restlessly, as the Greek strained above and other crimson evidence streaked from under the middle of the two sweating, panting forms, who were fighting—for what?—for what?

Boy's head turned away as another consciousness shrieked the question in his ear, and the hand of the Skipper came automatically down from the side of the chair, to twist it roughly until it faced again—

Two figures, now risen for another rush.

The slap of their wet bodies, tuned weirdly with the wash astern, so thought Looney Luke, sitting behind boat Number 1, writing, and looking up suddenly at the sky and down again to what he had written.

“A man's a master of his world, who's captain of the sea. He—”

A hoarse shout behind him and he listened and Morgan started suddenly at the wheel.

Yuka pressed back, back. His throat bursting with veins, the Greek's palm pushing at his upper lip and nose and the gums, where teeth were, and his knife slowly, surely descending.

Screams . . . silence . . . and then eyes . . . perhaps two pair which could not watch murder, turned away, then looked back suddenly.

Three figures are in the ring, two white and one blue-black; and white lips scream, "No, no! Christ, no!"

Boy had kicked Zeis back, kicked him in the mouth as he bent forward.

And Zeis, dripping, dazed, trembling, wondering, waited, panting. The second mate stood before him over the cowering form of Yuka, commanding.

The crew upon their feet shouted—what would they shout? And then silence, sudden and sinister; and all eyes watched, fascinated, the slowly approaching figure of the Captain.

Morgan craned forward. It was perhaps the only time that he had ever derived pleasure from the fact of Boy's presence upon the ship.

"Now he'll get it! He'll get it! Look!"

Father and son . . . and silence, Boy's eyes speaking all he had to say; the crew taut, watching breathlessly; Mr. Hop bending over Yuka.

"Get inside!"

Boy turned suddenly, obediently, toward the cabin.

Just for a moment Dog Leyton regarded his men.

The fight was over, the spell was broken. After this it would be murder, not hot-blooded, but cold-blooded. The faces of the crew asked a question which Leyton did not answer.

He turned away in the footsteps of his son.

An ugly rush as the crew would re-start the fight was stopped by a shout from Morgan at the wheel:

"Get down there! Clear decks!"

Patting the slimy back of Zeis, they led him away to a hot, stinking galley, a sweating, bleeding victor, while Mr. Hop puffed a little as he helped Yuka to a sitting posture and dabbed his wound, pausing to glance up smiling in response to an amused signal from his friend, Morgan, then following the latter's glance in the direction of the Captain's cabin, the door of which had been slid to.

Was it cowardice? Was Boy yellow?

Hard as nails, he had fought with men ashore, and on shipboard, too, and smashed them, beaten them to a pulp. Last time they had had to drag him off. You didn't have to draw him on, either; he was there and ready. Perhaps a little too ready with the readiness that comes of youth and sinew and pluck; but this weakness—?

What was this within him?

Was it his power to love; to love with a tenacity which was bigger than thoughts, words or blows,

bigger than himself? Was it his mother or God from whom this legacy had sprung—this ability to love with the steadfastness of the sea?

And whom did Boy love?

. . . The cabin spun before him. A fist, knotted and cruel, with a ring on the big little finger, had caught him squarely over the left eye.

When his vision cleared he saw his father, rolling a bristly, unshaven jaw, round and round, the chin stuck out in sinister invitation, distorting the bleared puffed eyes above.

“Come on, ye yeller rat! Hit me! Hit me! I hit ye; hit me!”

This, accompanied by an irritating backhand flip across the mouth, not too hard, carried with it almost a finesse, with just enough tickle in it, to send the blood mounting.

Boy answered. His fists closed; they were coming up.

Then the fingers opened as a vise might. They would take that red throat before him and choke the life out of it.

Passion swept a mist before his eyes, a mist personed by a horror—a beast—that always had been at him.

Then the mist cleared and Boy no longer saw a beast, but some one whom he loved—his father, the old dad—the dad whom they all said was half dotty.

Boy's hands dropped to his sides; his taut face

melted into softening lines; his eyes shone gently again; he swallowed quickly.

"I'll knock the dirty woman out o' yer hide!"

The words were bitten off, edged by hated memory.

"She was me mother, anyway, wasn't she?"

"Yer mother she was, and a low, dirty . . ."

"Stop that! Ye can't say that! *Ye shan't!*"

Again those fingers opened to choke and again that bristly jaw went round and round, below thin lips with white foam in the corners, hissing: "Hit me! Hit me!"

It sounded like the chant of a demon urging to kill—and then:

"You've got her cow eyes—hers—ye're her, in a man—soft, slimy, yellor!"

This was answered by a cry, and two pairs of fingers pressed and choked the rest.

The figure of the father was brave, unresisting, waiting, triumphant. At last, at last Boy showed fight!

Would he go on? Would he? He could stop him if he wanted to. Would those fingers press tighter on his throat? Would he try to kill? Was the beast loosed at last? Had that woman, that cow, that yellow streak been killed in him forever?

A moment's breathless pause and pressure of the fingers ceased; Boy's eyes raised from the throat and saw the face above his hands, its eager, savage

gleam of madness. He let go suddenly and spoke.

"Ye ain't right, Father; ye're sick."

"Sick—me, hey?" this with a savage blow across Boy's mouth.

But the sound of the blow was dull. The act was dull. Life had left the scene, because Boy stood still, very still, looking at an old man, suddenly convulsed, crimson, apoplectic, pathetic, who tried to speak, and fell a tumbled mass upon the floor.

It was Mr. Hop who, having entered noiselessly a moment before with a bowl of water, plaster and towel, helped Boy to lift the limp and ghastly weight to its bunk; and then he left without a word, as though one of these fits was the logical reaction of the excitement of the fight.

Boy stood looking at the prostrate form. He loosed the old man's collar and from the sweating forehead brushed back the gray and matted hair.

As he did this he was startled by the falling of a drop of blood upon the hand which but a moment before had struck him, then another . . . pat . . . pat. . . pat. . . they came.

He had turned away before he realized that they were from his own forehead—where that ring had cut him.

Boy took the roll of plaster which Mr. Hop had brought and tried with his clasp knife to cut a piece from it. He found this difficult. His hands trembled. He tried to tear it with his teeth.

At the sound, the old man turned, watching; a curious, strange calm upon his face.

Boy turned, surprised, as without much effort his father rose and stood before him.

Not a word was uttered as Dog Leyton took the plaster and wetting it with his mouth placed it gently on the wound and said:

"Ye bleed easy, Boy."

A pair of eyes caught his, large, welling, woman's eyes, brimming with love and understanding.

"It's nothin', Father. I love ye all the same."

A moment's pause; a hoarse shout.

"There ain't no such thing as love."

The crash of a bowl dashed upon the floor.

"Damn yer soft heart!"

The sea held the sun in a parting embrace, crimson, gold and purple. She was sobbing softly, Boy thought, as he went to the side and listened, dully; and then the soft drone of music drummed softly upon a single string and Luke's mellow voice:

"Wondrous are the women

What trips our sturdy beams,

Because they ain't here really,

They're only in our dreams."

Boy changed from one foot to the other and looked out across his sea—intensely wondering.

PART II

"If you've never been to Limehouse,
You've never been to sea;
It's the dirtiest spot in London,
But it's home, sweet home to me."

—LOONEY LUKE'S POEMS

CHAPTER I

MR. HOP was first seaman, boatswain, paymaster, clerk, purser, doctor, on *The Lady Spray*. He was short, fat and very dirty. He did not look like a sailor, but as a point of fact, was a particularly good one. Every language came nicely to his tongue, from the lingo of the Lascar to the guttural of the Eskimo.

Mr. Hop wore over his undershirt a pair of trousers and a waistcoat, and was never without a large pair of pince-nez spectacles, hanging by a startlingly fresh black ribbon from his neck. He affected at all times a Homburg hat with a guard of string tied to a buttonhole of his invariably half-opened waistcoat, because this hat was always blowing off. By manipulation of the string he was able to flip it on very cleverly. He seemed never to shave and yet his beard at no time appeared to be more than three days old. For some unearthly reason, he shined his shoes.

It was this same Mr. Hop who entered the tiny office of the Anglo-Scottish Tropical Navigating Company, Limehouse, S.E., usually spoken of as the A.S.T.N.C., with the pompous air of a man of affairs, and sitting uncomfortably on an orange box, wiped his brow and spoke one word:

"Damn!"

"Sorry, Cockey," observed the clerk. "Where's your old man?"

"I'm 'ere. Who wants me?" And sure enough, in full shore kit, stood Captain Leyton, master of *The Lady Spray*. Leyton looked well again; he had shaved; he always did to come ashore, and there was a white top on his cap.

The manager rose and approached him with some deference.

"Sorry, Captain, yer fer Leith right away. Orders just come down from the city."

"Damn!" said the Captain, just as Mr. Hop had. "I've let the crew off. I'll lose a tide. What the hell's all this changin' fer, anyway?"

"Orders is orders, as you as a master know full well, Captain." The manager, a tall, thin Mr. Petwee, with a drooping mustache, proffered a cigar.

"Thanks, Mr. Petwee." The sea captain turned automatically. "Mr. 'Op, will yer please razzle the bunch an' get 'em back? I'll make the 8.15 tide."

"Aye, aye, sir." Mr. Hop and his books and his hat left the office with a bang of the door.

That Captain Leyton was one of the quietest and ablest masters in the British mercantile service, as Mr. Petwee had often observed, refuting sundry insinuations, but he admitted that Dog Leyton was a hot 'un.

"He keeps 'is crew, don't 'e?" Mr. Petwee would assert. "There's Morgan, 'is first, been with 'im goin' on five-an'-twenty years."

Mr. Petwee liked Captain Leyton; Dog appealed to his imagination. He presented, ashore, the quiet calm and almost polish of the British seamaster of tradition; and Mr. Petwee knew a good deal. Petwee represented to Leyton the Company; he was sound and one of the few landsmen who knew how to handle seamen with the tact that comes of long experience. The two had been friends for thirty years, and Petwee's heart and ear had been audience to his suffering that time when Leyton's wife had left him. He was one of them as could drink a glass or two of whiskey without lowerin' his standin'. Leyton, mad drunk in *The Three Jolly Sailors*, had poured out his grief, his shame, his hate, his curse into Petwee's ear, and the latter had never referred to the subject since.

Neither had Leyton.

Petwee had said the right thing at the time and he had said the right thing since by saying nothing.

Thus, there was a bond between these men, and that was perhaps why Petwee was now more than anxious that *The Lady Spray* should make Leith on this trip.

"I wanted 'arf a word with ye about Leith, Cap'n. I got some news."

Quickly Leyton turned. "What news—about what? who?" He seemed to fill the tiny office, suddenly.

"'Ow about a spot o' comfort down at *The Sailors* an' I'll tell ye."

CHAPTER II

CLANCEY, one of my *Lady Spray's* estimable crew, who has not yet been formally introduced, having warmed the inner man with a couple of rums cold, paused, gazing up at the somber, dirty structure known to fame as Mrs. Brent's Sailors' Rest. His song about an Irish mother died upon his lips. He ascended the five steps, pulled the string which passed through a hole to the latch on the inside of the door, and entered. Clancey had a mission, and that mission was important and secret.

Mrs. Brent posed as the mother of all sailors. Indeed, it was once remarked that she was large enough to be mother of the entire British navy. True, she was large, muscular and drunk—always drunk, and this good, Christian woman, running a good Christian home, was a scheming old hypocrite.

Minnie Brent, Boy's Minnie, could have told you without any trouble a lot more that Ma Brent was. Minnie wasn't Mrs. Brent's real daughter. Everybody knew she wasn't that. Had she been, far less might have been said and thought about Minnie, because "a woman's got a right to do as she likes with 'er own child"—at least, that was the viewpoint of Limehouse.

But Minnie wasn't Ma Brent's daughter and every one knew it, though who Minnie's parents were—well, every one knew that nobody knew that either.

The main large room of the Sailors' Rest, the dining room, was the scene of an argument as Clancey entered, and Mrs. Brent, tant, tall and tipsy, listened with arms akimbo. She wanted somebody to say something about Queen Mary or Horatio Bottomley or Lloyd George—that was all. Let 'em start! She felt in excellent trim and spoiling for a fight. But she was to wait in vain because the six or seven nondescript resting sailors were concerned at that moment with a heated discussion of the bootlegging possibilities round the Florida coast of the States.

"It's seamen they want an' they'll pay good. Ye don't mind gettin' killed if ye're paid fer it."

Mrs. Brent turned quickly as Clancey entered.

"'Ullo there, Cockey wax! *The Spray's* in? Where's the boys?"

Clancey glanced and spoke quickly. His was an important mission.

"Mr. Morgan's comin' right down to see Minnie. He sent me along to tell ye."

A broad smile labored across Mrs. Brent's vast features.

"Righto, me lad! Get yerself a glass o' stout. Ye know where to find it."

Mrs. Brent weighed anchor and steamed away,

highly pleased because she had always liked Morgan. But there, what woman didn't?

Morgan possessed a certain restraint that matched his height. His knowledge of women was uncanny and those that had loved him knew that under that veneer, those set, subtle flatteries, that quiet thoughtfulness, a ruthless cruelty dwelt encased, waiting to spring out when tired of looking at the fun, to deal a sharp-taloned, seldom-healing blow.

And Mrs. Brent knew this. It had amused her for years.

She liked Morgan, that was all there was to it; and she felt she was the one person in the world to whom his second and crueller nature would mean nothing.

Why? Because she was scared of no man. One of the main reasons for Morgan's appeal to her was the possibility of a good mix-up. What a Saturday-nighter he'd make, this Morgan! He was the right height, and all. "Ye wouldn't 'ave to stoop down to slog 'im."

So she bided her time and waited. If it was Mr. Morgan's pleasure to cast an eye on Minnie, well be that as it may, Min it should be; and Morgan should see hers, Mrs. Brent's capable hand in helping things along for him in that direction.

Every man must have a bit of fun, and Min, for some unearthly reason, lay in the way of some men's taste. Why Morgan, with his refinement,

should—but, well . . . “Ye don’t know men, however well ye know ’em, but all sailors come ’ome.”

If he wanted a bit of skirt like Min, if he liked ’em small with rat-hair and pig-eyes, well, what of it? Tire him of the small ones and then his taste would be for the large—that was logic. Mrs. Brent was large. She knew men. She knew her man of the sea. Tell him nothing; let him do and say it all. “Get be’ind a ’orse to drive it.”

And now, glancing round the large, untidy room, her mind worked quickly.

“Come on, some o’ ye slobs, get this deck cleaned up like good boys. I’m expectin’ some private company. Make it snappy!”

Mrs. Brent had lately seen an American movie and the “make it snappy” line appealed to her.

The sea gentlemen present looked up.

“Who is it, Ma? Yer Sunday-go-to-meetin’ bloke?”

This was followed by a general bustling to obey.

Clancey emerged from the next room with a large glass of stout in his hand, and glancing round furtively he flicked some froth from his red mustache.

His mission was not yet complete; at least his most private mission wasn’t, so while the resters cluttered round to straighten up the backless chairs and pools of brown coffee on the table, Clancey drew one man aside and asked quickly: “Where’s Min?”

"Washin' up in the sink." His informant jerked a thumb in the direction of a half-open door at the back of the room.

Clancey noted the direction with his eyes and paused thoughtfully. The road wasn't clear. Mrs. Brent, changing her apron, was moving toward the mirror, a long coil of lank hair trailing down, waiting to be rolled up again in evening fashion. She'd be done in a minute and then . . .

CHAPTER III

SAILORS eat eggs an' jam for tea at five o'clock on shore an' eggs an' jam sticks to dishes.

Soda in the water gets the marks off plates quick, but then soda blisters an' wrinkles yer hands an' if it 'appens to be the day that the ship with yer bloke on gets in, the extra trouble of rubbin' is worth it.

So Min was rubbing hard. A mountain of cracked plates of all colors and sizes towered almost to the ceiling; and the clouds of steam were so thick that you couldn't see the top of the mountain. Min had thought of this once and had said to herself, with biting sarcasm: "Ain't nature grand?"

She paused to look into a cup before dipping it. It was a Queen Victoria's Coronation cup, the one that Mrs. Brent always used, and the tea leaves sticking to a thick layer of undissolved sugar presented a striking pattern. What a fortune to-day! Yesterday, the cup had fallen into the water and Min couldn't read it, and things had gone wrong, because she had not been pre-warned, but to-day, look!

Lummie! a line of tea-leaves worked their way down to—what was that thing? A sewing machine? No! A twist upside down. What was it?

Something unusual, but look! it was, it was—hooray! Look!

And there before Min's gaze, at the bottom of the cup, stood the most perfect hearse. There were two horses and a driver in a topper.

Ma Brent was going to die! No, that was too good to be true. But cups never lie. Damn her! Hers was coming to her at last! She was going to peg out and Satan was going to drag her and her fifteen stone of blinkin' misery down, down to . . . and Min's lips came together and her odd brows contracted. Her thin body shook with ecstasy as the Queen's Coronation cup sank suddenly—too suddenly—below the suds, struck bottom and cracked.

And then the thought, the tragic thought in Min's mind: Would Ma Brent die before breakfast to-morrow? If she lived only that long she would see the crack. But perhaps even if she lived she'd be sickenin' for that funeral and wouldn't have the strength to clout and curse and tell Min what she was.

Min knew that well enough. She didn't need no tellin'. She was of uncertain origin, a product of sailor-town. What more could be said! Slight, cheeky, whimsical, seventeen, she knew a lot more than "what" she was—in fact, she knew everything there was to be known about men and women; and it was, perhaps, because of this definite knowledge that Minnie was a "good girl."

Every one didn't think so; in fact, most people

thought and said differently when discussing Min and Mrs. Brent's penchant for paste jewels and gin and the money she spent and the tick she gave to sailors she liked.

"It's a crime what she makes that Min do down at The Rest," they would say.

But Min knew she was good; and it wasn't Mrs. Brent's fault neither, not by a long sight, it wasn't.

And her Boy knew, because she had told him so, and if Boy knew and Boy loved her, come rack, come rope, she didn't give a tinker's dam for nobody.

And then again, Min knew that there wasn't a really bad sailor in the world. She knew a sailor's heart—the heart he found at sea, when hope and love and a tiny spark of God stole out of the vast silences into him and made him long for home and kids and think how he'd protect them and fight for them.

And then the sailor knowing, perhaps, that this could never be, would lock those thoughts in a treasure chest and to that Min had the passkey.

When drunken arms seized her, and rough hands tore at her blouse, she just whispered:

"I ain't as strong as you are, matey, an' if I was yer own kid, ye'd fight fer me, wouldn't ye? Ye'd kill a bloke what bruised me!"

And a pair of watery green eyes would seek eyes rum-crazed, and hold them, and command them, and the treasure chest within the man would open and . . . and . . .

Did you know that sailors wept?

And Min would kiss the rough hand and say, "Blimey, matey, yer my idea of a man an' I wish ye were me daddy."

And a man would rise and walk away; and Min would look after the retreating figure of a new champion clad in armor, a gentleman with her silken glove upon his lance; and she would watch, breathless, until her knight disappeared into the foggy shades of Limehouse.

Minnie Brent knew what she was. Mrs. Brent didn't have to keep telling her. She also knew what she really was: a girl, a "good girl," who could work and cook and love and wait—wait for Boy, her Boy, who loved her.

And he was due home to-day, or to-morrow, and . . .

She looked up as Mrs. Brent wafted into the steaming scullery, exuding a strong odor of musk. She had lots of it now; Marty had brought her in a lot from the last trip.

A glance at Ma's tidied appearance and Min knew something was up. The Coronation cup was well hidden away. Ma glanced at her and hic-coughed loudly. A glass of stout lends body to a woman.

"Clean yerself up, *The Spray's* in. Mr. Morgan's comin' down."

"What, Morgan? 'Im again?"

"Yes, Mister Morgan. What the 'ell 'e sees in you, I can't imagine; but Mister Morgan it is.

And—drop that cloth an' finish these after. Turn yer gas down an' leave yer water on. Take my blue shawl out o' the cupboard an' get them curlers out o' yer 'air."

This was a death-blow. The steam would take out the curl after, and those curlers had been in for a week, waiting for Boy.

"I'll put me 'at on over 'em."

"Ye'll do as yer told! Another word out o' yer cheeky mouth an' I'll . . ."

Ma's strong fingers had seized a Hinds curler full of soft, mouse-colored hair.

"Get 'em off before I pull 'em off. An' get a bite o' soap to work on that neck. What any man can see in yer skinny . . ."

"Argh! G'wan, shut up; I'm doin' it, ain't I? I don't want no Morgan to see nothin' in me."

But Ma Brent had left, and Min with a wisdom born of hard experience followed the line of least resistance.

Boy was home—home from the sea and he should see her with her hair curled and the blue shawl, if she had to duck for it.

Boy seldom came to the Rest. Mrs. Brent didn't cotton to him, and he didn't like her. He'd show it by not talking, and the only thing Mrs. Brent feared was silence. Then, there was that grousy old dad of his, teaching Boy to hate everything, every one.

The door opened and she turned. Clancey sneaked in.

"'Ullo, Minnikins! Boy says 'e'll be off watch in 'arf an hour. He wants you to meet 'im in Lock'art's."

Min twisted a curl of hair into place and throwing her head back with mock drama, she placed her hand upon her heart.

"And did me lover send 'is love?"

Of course, she knew she was going to meet Boy at Lockhart's. She always did. Boy didn't have to send to remind her; but that was like Boy, he was always so careful.

"'Ow's Boy keepin' himself, Clan?"

"Foine!" And Clancey watched her, interested. Min wasn't pretty, but she had a way with her.

"You'll hexcuse a lady performin' of her toilette before ye, Mr. C."

Clancey would excuse anything.

"Pipe the bleedin' lamb bein' led to the slaughter."

He looked up quickly at this. "You mean, Morgan? He's on ye, ain't he?"

"He ain't on or off, 'e's nowhere."

Clancey's eyes twinkled mischievously. "You love yer Boy though, don't you, Min?"

"What, Boy? my Boy?" And two green eyes filled suddenly. "Blimey, you said it!"

CHAPTER IV

THE sitting-room, the holy of holies where Mrs. Brent received her private company, was on the other side of the hall. It was a beautiful room, over-furnished and difficult to get around; an oppressive, musty-smelling cupboard. Pictures of sailors were everywhere; wax flowers vied for prominence with china anchors. Mrs. Brent's own dear, dead father hung side by side with her first and second dead husbands.

There were also three pictures of Our Saviour; a text "Rock of Ages Cleft for Me"; horsehair high-backed chairs, that cost easily a quid apiece; a rug from Persia; curtains from Spain; cushion covers from Japan.

Oh, but then, of course, a woman of Mrs. Brent's refinement and taste must have somewhere that which would bespeak her character.

It was here that the Reverend W. F. P. Vane called monthly to thank her for her gentle, Christian home and her uplifting influence upon the lives of "our dear brave sailors." It was here, upon that very couch, that Montague Brent had proposed and his, the fifth, with the third and fourth husbands' pictures would have been hung above it, but that she was afraid to remove the three pictures of Our Saviour.

It was here, into this stately room, that the tall figure of Mr. Morgan was ushered.

He looked very much "the lad," so Mrs. Brent thought, in his brown cap and his brown suit to match. His bright brown boots creaked a bit so Mrs. Brent told him he could get the squeak out in water. While fastening an Indian leg ornament around her wrist for a bangle (just a little present) he remarked, casually, that it was raining outside and he'd walked up, and yet the shoes weren't cured. Mrs. Brent remarked she must be wrong and what a "one" he was to pick her up so quickly "has to the haccuracy of her statements with regards to his boots," which were just the gentlemanly color.

"And Min's downright glad about your comin', too, Mr. Morgan."

Ma Brent beamed upon him as he sat suddenly upon the high-backed sofa for two and drew out something wrapped in tissue paper.

"Minnie's a lucky girl. I was tellin' her so." Mrs. Brent was furtively eyeing the package.

"What'd she say to that?" The question was hard and sudden.

"She cried with joy, Mr. Morgan; straight she did; and I cried with 'er. Ye're very dear to me, Mr. Morgan, ye know that yerself."

He glanced up, a strange look in his eyes. "Well, when Min comes across fair ye'll have a nice little somethin' comin', Ma, and ye know that all right, all right."

"A glass of stout, Mr. Morgan?"

"No tar, Ma, it affects me breath, and . . ."

Mrs. Brent screwed up her eyes and coyly pointed a fat finger at him. "Ye ain't 'arf a lady's man, ye ar'n't. . . . Lucky Min, I say, lucky Min!"

She turned as Morgan rose suddenly and "Lucky Min" stood at the door, her curls and coils of hair in bewildering directions glistened in the incandescent light from the hall and the shawl thrown round her shoulders in a certain—yes, Min had a way with her, all right; she wasn't pretty, but she had a way.

"Good evenin', Minnie dear," Morgan broke the momentary silence with a very heavy bass voice. He walked forward with confidence.

"How are ye, Mr. M.?" piped Min, and walked forward with equal assurance.

Mrs. Brent paused at the door. If ever she hated Minnie, it was now.

"I trust Mr. Morgan won't 'ave cause fer complaint as regards his reception, Minnie dear."

Minnie's eyes came round. She looked like a mouse posing for its profile. "Oh, don't mensh', Ma dear."

The door closed and she was alone with Morgan.

"Minnie, ye look fine!"

"Do I, now, Mr. M.? That's nice of yer to remark that, so to speak."

"I mean it, Min. I find words difficult to express in a social manner o' speaking, so I posted

ye a letter with a lot o' me thoughts in it, as regards you. You'll 'ave it in the morning."

"Fine! I like letters to come."

Morgan bent a little forward, stiffly. His hand stole scrapily down the horsehair stuffing, seeking hers.

Min had been to the movies more than once and all the heroines seemed to carry a little handkerchief in their hands; thus, the hand that Morgan sought, sensing its large, red pursuer, closed round a tiny pink handkerchief and went all the way up to Minnie's snub nose and paused just under it, while Minnie sniffed unnaturally.

Min's eyes turned suddenly at the rustle of tissue paper, which was wrapped round something upon Morgan's knee. She watched—she wasn't interested, not a bit! Not in nothing he brought.

"Min, I picked this up in Gibraltar," Morgan's voice was a full tone louder. "I felt it would suit your type." And a high Spanish comb came into view; a beautiful piece, with several diamonds in the top.

Min's head was perfectly still as Morgan reverently, almost delicately, pushed the five large teeth into the most important coil of her hair, and, with almost an effeminate flick of his finger, adjusted a hairpin that became dislodged during the operation.

"Minnie, it looks great. Take a look at yourself."

Then Min, feeling at least seven feet tall, and walking forward with a steady balancing motion,

like the muffin-man who carries his tray on his head on Sunday afternoons, glided to the glass and looked at another Min. The diamonds flashed, and Morgan's voice seemed miles away.

Min, Minnie Brent—she knew all along that this Morgan didn't want to marry her! She knew that Ma Brent knew that, and she knew that Ma Brent knew there was no getting Min any other way than to try and trick her. She knew, also, that there had been a foul bargain between Morgan and her foster-mother, unlikely, improbable, if you like, but too true.

Morgan was piqued by Minnie's indifference. He was after her. She sensed it. He showed it in everything he did; in every breath he took.

For peace and quiet and policy's sake she had given in to Ma Brent and now sat in with him, but this bloke didn't mean anything more than that he wanted her and he was going to get her somehow, and in some way her foster-mother was going to profit by his success, if he had any.

So here she was, looking like the bloomin' Queen of Sheba . . . and Morgan coming closer, looking like . . .

"Wanderin' 'ands . . ."

She could trick him, too. She didn't want the bloody comb. She didn't want nothing that Boy didn't give her—no; nothing.

But Boy was home and she'd got to have a chance to see him and she didn't want no row, now; not by a long shot.

They were seated again on the couch, and Min sighed lightly looking across, sideways, at a ship in glass on the table, at her elbow. She wished to the bloomin' Lord she was in glass at that moment.

Morgan was speaking. "Some'ow, I feel, Min, as you can't stand me at any price."

She turned and looked into his face. She was the lady in the movies now, a kiddin' of some bloke as she didn't want; and he? Anyway, it didn't matter about the plot; she was the lady kiddin' 'im. That was sufficient.

"Oh, don't feel that way, Mr. M. Was you wishful to splice me?"

"Would you get spliced, if I arsked yuh? Would yuh, Min?"

"Mr. M., yer so sudden."

"Min, ye've got me on a string. Ye've got me fair an' proper, baby. Ye've . . ."

So this bloody calf was trying to kid her! Her, Min! Minnie Brent! He's got his nerve! Hark to him, what muck! He was still talking.

Now was the time to sigh again and look away. He was kidding her, and she was kidding him.

What swine men were!

And then a rough hand fumbled under her shawl. . . .

There was a snarl like the yelp of a dog, a crash . . . a ship in glass hurled . . . a diamond comb under little heels . . . the slam of a door . . . and Morgan was alone.

CHAPTER V

THE Three Jolly Sailors was one of the nicest pubs round Noak's wharf. Mr. Brisley, the proprietor, had been there for forty years. He was a town councilor and a Buffalo in good standing. He prided himself on the clubby atmosphere of his saloon-bar. Under the portrait of Edward VII over the mantelpiece, Mr. Brisley himself smiled forth from two frames; one with himself as an oarsman and the other of himself just about to start on the London-to-Brighton walk, seven years back. So, of course, The Jolly Sailors was naturally a place for a quiet, confidential talk over a glass of whiskey.

At a table by the window, Dog Leyton, draining his seventh, listened intently, looking away, a vague look of distance in his eyes, while Mr. Petwee, still on his second, talked with an eloquence which would have moved any one on earth but Dog Leyton to tears.

The present subject had been commenced and dismissed several times; generalities and shipping had been discussed; and now Petwee had eagerly begun again upon the first topic.

"Life's too short, Captain. I'm going to chance your offense and tell it ye to yer face. Ye loved

her, ye know ye did. Whatever she's been, she's a woman and ye love 'er still."

Leyton turned suddenly. "What else have ye to tell me? Make it short."

Petwee moved his glass aside and bent forward eagerly. "Only to ask you to search within yerself fer yer own 'eart. Be the real big feller that ye are and forgive. Go to her—she needs ye."

"Go to who? . . . Why?" Leyton swung round, facing him.

"You either can't or ye won't understand."

Leyton's hand commanded silence. He spat deliberately and flung his cigar-end away, drained his drink, his eyes half-closed, and rose and carried the glass to the bar.

Mrs. Brisley beamed. "Another spot, Captain Leyton? One on the 'ouse? Yes, do."

A curt nod answered her, and leaning with both elbows upon the bar, the sea captain lowered his head and gazed into the sawdust . . . as if searching there for something.

Petwee came and stood beside him. "I have written the address in case you relent. It's up from The Thistle on the waterfront."

Leyton looked up suddenly. The paper and the drink had arrived simultaneously in either hand. He drank first and then read what Petwee had written:

"MacFarlane's Rescue Home,
Waterfront,
Leith."

"I never thought to ask what name she was there under. They're very nice up at the 'ome there. They worked miracles for 'er. Put it in yer pocket, anyway." And Petwee gently pushed a hand which trembled violently.

Leyton put the fragment of paper in his pocket and turned brusquely to Petwee. "Ye're way be'ind. Come on, drink up!"

"Fill 'em up, Ma."

And again the arms on the bar and again that head down, searching for that something in the sawdust.

Some one asked Petwee for a light and Mr. Hop came in and spoke to the Captain.

"All O.K., sir."

Leyton looked up suddenly and only Petwee would have noticed a tinge of irony in Mr. Hop's tone as he said: "Feeling all right, Captain?"

"Eh? What? What?"

"Mr. Morgan'll be right down, sir. He was up at The Rest. I give 'im yer orders. The men are gettin' aboard."

Without a word, Leyton turned his back on Mr. Hop, who left.

"Good health!" and two glasses raised.

It was Dog Leyton who suddenly broke the silence that followed. In a peculiar manner he gripped Petwee's arm and lurched towards his ear. "Who . . . did she get away with? . . . You know."

"Who?" Petwee pulled away a step.

"You know who. You dirty liar, you do? Who was it?"

The grip on Petwee's arm tightened painfully. Petwee knew his man. Dog was dangerous when he was like this; that ferocious fighting hate of opposition; that . . .

"Tell me, Petwee, who? Who?"

Petwee straightened up. He was no funk; he was the kind of thin man who marches in at the head of strike-breakers.

"Get off my arm!" He shook it free.

Leyton's eyes sparkled quickly and then dulled. "Drink up. Come on."

"Certainly."

"Who was it? Come on, ye know. How'd she get to Leith? Is that where she went first?"

"I don't know. All I know is that whoever 'e was, 'e deserted her."

"Threw 'er out, eh?" Leyton's hat tipped to the back of his head as he wiped his brow.

"That's about the size of it. She'd been drinkin' heavily fer years. It had got 'er proper."

"So 'e threw 'er out, eh?"

"I don't know. Go yerself an' ask 'er."

"Threw 'er out, eh?"

"Ye'll know when ye ask 'er."

"Me? Me?" Leyton stood two inches taller. He slammed the bar. The glasses rattled.

Mrs. Brisley touched her husband's arm.

Leyton turned to them and executed a reassuring gesture; then he spoke again to Petwee in a

hoarse whisper: "Me, go to 'er? Yer mad! If she was lyin' in the gutter . . ."

Petwee turned away suddenly. He had heard it all before, on that memorable night years back.

Leyton caught his arm and swung him roughly around, "Petwee, fer the love o' Jesus Christ, tell me the name o' the man that took 'er from me."

Petwee shook his head. "I don't know, Leyton."

Leyton spoke slowly. "I'll find 'im one day. I'll find 'im an' when I do, I'm goin' to . . ."

Petwee was looking across his shoulder at some one who stood there.

Leyton turned quickly. "Hello, Morgan."

And Morgan explained that it was all set for Leith; and his captain called for drinks for three; and when they came Morgan said: "Good health, Captain"; and his captain replied: "Good health, Mr. Morgan."

CHAPTER VI

NOAK'S was one of the oldest wharves in Limehouse and it looked it. The Anglo-Scottish Tropical Navigating Company was an old-fashioned firm. Thus Noak's wharf was dirty, cobwebby, smelly in summer time and dank in winter. Folk around looked old and grimy; and only very daring, dirty, disreputable cats visited this wharf, because the rats flourished fat and full of fight.

But our *Lady Spray* was clean and white. She was no chicken. She was a neat, spruce old lady, whose master took good care of her; not that he loved her, but a creature of *The Lady Spray's* figure and temperament gave smoother and better service when she felt clean and fresh.

She always conveyed in a subtle manner her delicate boredom and alternate horror of Noak's wharf. Her nose in the air, she reminded one of a great lady in silks, slumming against her will. When the tide was out, she would lean away sideways, upon the mud, the personification of disdainful shipdom. When the tide was high, she would tug restively, fretfully at her moorings.

When the supreme sailing moment came, she shook herself like a greyhound, as her sea laughed into the mouth of the Thames, washing her white

sides considerably, and whispering a swishing, breezy welcome.

The sinking sun bathed Lambeth in a celestial light; up from Wapping came the gray mist of evening; and with the tide rose *The Lady Spray*, higher and higher, with increasing dignity and assurance, white and beautiful.

Across her decks washing fluttered and through this Looney Luke, seated for'ard, looked up and off and then back to a poem of his immediate creation.

"If you're about to start caressin'
Of the girl whose lips you crave,
Be careful of your dressin'
And don't forget to shave."

He changed the words "about to" to "going to," which sounded better.

He looked off and up again at the subject of his latest inspiration. His blue transparent eyes opened wide, glistening with amusing thoughts. He loved what he saw. It whispered of youth, hope, love, and beauty now suddenly resolved into something which, though still beautiful, was marred by the shameful, man-made habit of trying to be different from what you are, the habit of destroying your natural free line to look your best and thus, often, succeeding only in looking your worst.

The Boy of Looney Luke's affection was rough-haired, open-throated, with a superb litheness of

the belt-line, and now he watched him as, before a bit of broken mirror, he put the final touches to his shore toilette. Presently he stood back, the curl, a grand affair, carefully tongued and greased, rolling down like a bursting wave, broke just underneath the long peak of a checked cap. Round his throat, twice round, a red and white kerchief, just too tight, swelled the blue-brown, clean-shaved neck and chin enough to destroy the pleasant, strong line. A double-breasted suit of blue serge, with nice, spreading, bell-bottomed trousers, black highly polished shoes, a heavy watch chain hanging from his buttonhole and disappearing into the outside breast pocket, whence a new packet of Player's Navy Cut cigarettes peeped out dressily, were the externals.

Boy sighed. It was well. He was satisfied. The two hours' work upon himself had repaid him. He had bathed with Sunlight soap in fresh water. He glanced at his nails and opened the small blade of his knife.

He heard the distant, muffled booming of Big Ben, the clock of Parliament, strike the hour.

Promptly as the echo of the last throbbing boom had died away, some one appeared to Boy—a plump, short she-person, who appeared to be dressed for some unusual occasion. The climb up the steep narrow gang-plank from the wharf had fluttered her somewhat and she gasped a breathless question.

“He's over there for'ard, your lover is, Marian,

a-waitin' for ye." Boy towered over her, impressively, and gestured with great dignity in the direction of Looney Luke. "'Ow's things?"

"Nicely, an' the same to you, Mr. Boy."

So Marian, still fluttering, impatiently passed on, gazing forward and tripping over sundry things until she came to her Luke, who had risen to meet her.

Boy watched them embrace, disengage and embrace again. He saw Luke take from under his coat two shimmering paradise feathers and he heard the shrill scream of delight from Marian.

"Luke, Luke! 'Ow could ye? Oh, Luke!"

Boy mused. How alike all love was! Soon he'd kiss his girl like that and he'd kiss her twice like that, and perhaps more; and he'd brought something for his Min, too. He turned at a step behind him.

"'Ullo, Clancey! Did ye tell Min I'd be down?"

"The first mate's been down there sittin' with 'er. 'E took 'er a diamont comb."

"Who said so?"

"I seen 'im go in and the boys were talking of the comb 'e bought 'er." Clancey lowered his voice. "There was diamonts in it an' all."

"Diamonts, me eye!"

So Morgan had been down. Mrs. Brent was working with him; Min had said so, before. Damn that swine! What was he after, anyway? He knew she was Boy's girl.

The handkerchief tightened round his neck.

Then he spoke with breezy confidence. Why let a hand see the news had hit him? They all knew—every one knew, but Dog, that Min was his.

"I don't care if he gave 'er the Kaiser's gold tooth. Wait till ye pipe what I got for 'er." And, smiling, he turned below.

Clancey walked forward to where Looney Luke was arranging the two beautiful feathers in Marian's hat.

"'Ello, Clancey! Don't this take the cake? Take a look!" And Marian stepped back as Madame Pompadour once did.

Clancey paused, impressed. "It's very Frenchy, I *will* say." Then with a tipsy step he stood beside Luke and spoke dramatically. "Luke, me old sport, it is such men as ye what makes England what she is to-day."

Luke glanced up proudly as Clancey continued with a gesture toward Marian, "Blimey, Luke, ye should be proud if I do say so."

Luke smiled again. He was proud. His eyes dimmed gratefully. His twisted features almost straightened. And Clancey, excusing it politely to the girl, led him aside.

"'E's gone fer that chicken now, Boy 'as. Ye'd better be there, Luke, an' talk Boy up a bit. Ye've got the knack. 'Ere 'e is now."

And they looked up together as Boy emerged from the companionway with a covered cage in his hand. He laughed gayly and beckoned them.

"What ho she bumps! 'Ere's a present what lives!"

Both men drew near in silence, waiting.

With a flourish Boy flicked the cover from the cage and looked. "Come on, now, speak yer line for the gentlemen."

No answer came; he looked again, and then his lips trembled as dumbly he gazed at a sticky mass of blood and feathers, red and green. . . . Noah was dead!

Boy's teeth came together. With a spasmodic movement of his body he wildly flung the cage and its tragic contents out, out to a place where the mud and river met.

"Blast 'is dirty soul, I'll kill 'im fer that!"

He knew who had done it; of course he knew; and the others knew, that Morgan had "had an accident" with Noah's cage.

Clancey, who had seen the whole thing the day before, had told Luke how as Morgan passed, the parrot had called, "Minnie, I love ye," and how Morgan had turned, lifted the cage and gone away, to return a few moments later with the same cage, still covered, and a curious smile upon his face.

Clancey had wanted to tell Boy immediately after the black thing had happened, but Luke had counseled otherwise, with "Let him find it." And Luke knew best—yes, Luke always knew.

Now, without a word, Boy walked to the rail, his head averted from them, and Clancey searched

Luke's face. He wanted to ask what they should do. But Luke was looking away. . . .

Peeping over the top of the hatch from behind, two paradise feathers fluttered gayly in the wind. Marian, with her back to them, was waiting for her lover to return.

He certainly was a "one," this Luke! Clancey with amusement watched him as he stealthily crept forward toward the waving feathers, and smiled as a moment later he returned with them, glancing back toward the hat where now no feathered evidence of love waved.

Boy turned at Looney Luke's step behind him, and gazed at the proffered feathers.

"These have filled their purpose, Boy," said Luke. "It ain't what ye give a woman what gives 'er joy—it's the fact that ye give it."

Boy, puzzled, was about to speak—but then, Looney Luke was always right. No one ever questioned the wisdom of Looney Luke. So Boy took the feathers, almost eagerly, and stuffed them under his coat.

"When I've given them to Min, and she's had 'er thrill, I'll pinch 'em back for yer, Luke," he said. But Luke had gone.

Clancey stole after Luke and heard a slight scream, and a voice asking, naturally, "Where's yer feathers, Marian?"

Marian's hands clapped suddenly to her hat.

"Blimey, Luke, they must 'ave blowed away."

"Blowed away?" Luke's voice rose in surprise.

"Oh, Luke, can yer find it in yer 'eart to fergive me?"

And, oh, what a sweet moment for Luke to hold her plump body to him, and whisper he would always forgive her whatever she did, and feel her thrill and quiver at his words! And then again, looking over her shoulder, he saw Boy dancing gayly down the gangplank, and he thrilled to his soul. Luke knew the ecstasy, the glowing joy of making some one happy—every one happy. Looney Luke, at moments, was very close to God.

Boy was happy. His sky had cleared. The reaction from Noah's death and his rage, and the touching gift from Luke, had set him tingling. His head was whirling. He wanted to sing aloud.

He was going to see Min, and, whistling gayly, he stepped upon the quay. Strangely enough, a lot of the crew seemed to be standing around and two or three of them, as they saw him, started down from Pea's Lane. Funny; what was the idea? And then Mr. Hop stood suddenly before him:

"All aboard! We get out for Leith on the tide. Captain's orders."

"Eh?" Boy gasped.

"That's all. There ain't no 'eh.'"

Mr. Hop walked on and Boy caught his arm. The act was unnatural. He seldom spoke to Mr. Hop, let alone touched him. Mr. Hop was hand in glove with Morgan. He had helped to bring

Boy into the world—yes; but there had never been any love lost between them.

“I got ’arf an hour, ain’t I?”

“I told ye the orders. Take ’arf a year. It wouldn’t make no difference to nobody.”

And Boy followed the retreating figure upon the deck, where many of the crew stood around, some tight, some sober, but all disgruntled at the change of orders.

Mr. Hop bustled past them importantly, while Boy stood irresolute.

Something was working against him—against him and Min. What was it? First, Morgan’s priority off the ship as first mate, then Noah, the parrot, dead, and now . . .

And Min would be waiting at Lockhart’s at this very moment. It was ten past seven.

His body shook and then the father, the Dog Leyton in him, sprang suddenly out of his eyes. Passionately throwing his cap to the deck he trampled on it; and one of the hands laughed.

Boy’s fists clenched. . . . “What the hell are ye laughin’ at? You! You, I mean!”

“Can’t I laugh?”

“No; you can’t laugh at me, ye dirty—!”

A quick movement forward; room made for him; the scoffer, still and sullen; Boy, seeing red, raised his fist.

“My ’ands ain’t up. I ain’t fightin’ ye,” the sailor said, sullenly.

He did not fight—this man, and there are such

men. Their chins recede a little and their ears stick out. His did.

"Why won't ye fight?"

Dog Leyton, himself, might have been speaking. There was the same phlegm in the voice.

And then Luke's voice broke in with: "Because ye're an officer of the ship. That's why he won't."

A pause. A glance at Luke's face. A sense of the utter futility of it all; and miserable, very near to tears, Boy pushed his way through the knot of beer-breathed onlookers and went to the side to look down at nothing, towards the misty quay.

Unutterably lonely, Boy could not have expressed it in that way. His heart throbbed against his ribs. His throat ached. He felt sick. His hands trembled and the immeasurable distance between himself and all the others became tragically plain.

He suffered inwardly; anguish tore at something within him and made him ill. . . .

A sailor just curses at such things and shrugs his shoulders.

Why not? He is attuned to the inevitable, a disciple of fate.

But such a mental attitude was impossible to Boy. His shoulders would not shrug.

The militant surging within him, restrained, made him want to scream. It made him want to roll in the black mud below. It made him want to slash his throat. It made him want to . . .

It was Morgan—Morgan—Morgan! that long-

legged, sinister, haunting, hating thing, that dogged him! It was 'im—'im—'im—

Boy's red hands gripped the rail at the side, but it was not a rail they gripped—it was Morgan's throat. He had Morgan by the throat and Morgan was gasping and choking. His eyes were rolling. Red hands tore at his in frenzy. Morgan's eyes were glazing, turned up at him. Morgan was dying . . . going out . . . going out . . .

"Ooo-oo! Oo-oo! Darlin'!"

What was that?

"Dar-l-i-n!" came up across the mud in a shrill crescendo, and a distant siren, like a beautiful, vague obligato swept up as an accompaniment.

Through the mist Boy saw Min, his Min, waving her hand, hatless, breathless, like a will-o'-the-wisp blown from a summer field of corn onto Noak's Wharf.

Boy, craned over the side, shouted: "Can't get off. We're goin' out."

And he saw Min's arms come out entreatingly, a misty, beckoning Eve. A forefinger worked backwards and forwards at the end of a thin, outstretched arm.

Boy was still. He might have been about to leap the intervening space, so tense was his body, and Luke's voice spoke softly beside him:

"A month without a kiss; a sin to miss!"

He turned and others of the crew stood near, interested. "G'wan, mate, the lady's callin' ye."

"Ah, his papa'd whip 'im!"

"Well, he'd die fer a lady, wouldn't 'e?"

And then Boy's voice, quick, excited: "Who're ye kiddin'? I ain't no baby, see, see?"

"Oo-oo! Oo-oo! Boy-ee!" the delicious music crept up faintly.

Boy turned and Min watched him come, hand over hand down the moorings. A swing, a jump and Boy, hatless, radiant, beautiful, stood beside her.

Before the world she went into his arms and rested there.

Then the feathers from under his coat . . . a shrill yell of delight and two voices speaking at once . . . another kiss . . . Min's face red and Boy's face white.

A moment's pause and a question from him.

Her voice lowered to answer it. "I'm busted down at The Rest. I'm scared to go back. It was Morgan. He tried to rush me, and I saw red and sloshed 'im, and . . . he . . ."

At that moment three men emerged from The Three Jolly Sailors, one drunk and two sober.

One of the sober pair, bidding farewell to the one who was drunk, lowered his voice to say:

"Don't forget what I've been sayin', Captain."

Without answer the one who was drunk turned, lurching toward the other sober man, a tall man, who had walked a pace forward. Together they passed down towards Noak's.

Min had finished speaking and was waiting be-

cause Boy did not immediately answer. He was thinking hard.

Here stood before him the one thing he lived for. The sea? Yes, he loved the sea; but she was and always would be there. Nobody could bash her about, grab, maul and curse her and make her cry for want of somebody to take care of her. He could always get the sea.

And then there was *The Spray*—yes, but even she carried for him a cargo of terrible memories, and lately things had been getting worse . . . and there was Morgan!

After this, any day, any hour, something might rise up in Boy against his better sense and blind him . . . and then he would be hanged for Morgan's death.

And Dog was getting worse, drinking more, cursing more. Those fits were coming oftener.

Really except Luke there wasn't any one aboard *The Spray* he cared to even talk to much. Clancey was all right—yes, there was Clancey. Clancey liked him all right. But what did he ever say outside dirty stories and coarse wit? He was funny enough, sometimes, but . . .

Boy's heart was longing for something. It always had longed. He had used to think it was for his mother, that whispering shadow, that nobody would tell him anything about; but lately, that last trip or two, yes, since last Christmas, he had known that it was for Min he had been longing.

He felt differently when he thought about her. He had told the sea about her at night, and the sea had sighed and seemed to say she wished that she was human; but then the sea was in love with her sun, and they met and kissed every morning and every night, and even when you couldn't see them at it, they did it behind the storms, with, afterwards, the sea kicking up her legs, as much as to say, "Ain't ye mad, ye can't see?"

Boy wanted his Min, at night and in the morning, in the open and behind the storm. What was the use of hanging about? Life was too short to wait for anything. Luke had said that many a time, and who knew anything if Luke didn't?

Then there was the menace to Min down there at The Rest; the kind of thing Min had just told him about.

And then there was dad, old Dog. Boy's love for his father was hanging on a thread. He just didn't know about him; and then his hand went up to the spot where he had only taken the plaster off that afternoon, while dressing; the cut still was apparent to his fingers. It was a pretty strong thread, though, that love was hanging on. Boy's eyes moistened as he remembered how Dog had put that plaster on.

Oh, God, what a mix-up it all was! What's the use of standin' still and thinkin'? Ye can't do nothin' whatever ye do. Other people had brains to do things, words to say and plans to make. What . . . ?

"A penny for 'em." Min was looking up at him, smilingly. "There ye go off again in one of them bloomin' trances. Just fancy doin' that when I'm 'ere!"

"They're worth more'n a penny, Min," and suddenly it was a man who spoke, a full grown man, with a steady, hard voice, and a chin stuck out underneath it.

"I'm gonna jump the ship an' splice ye!"

A gasp from Min.

He wasn't talking English; he was talking Latin or something. No English words ever sounded as good as that. She just watched. Boy was fumbling with something at a belt, underneath his waistcoat.

Boy drew out a flat packet of bank notes. "Five, ten, fifteen, and there's eighteen!" Three five pound notes, three single pounds, pressed into Min's empty hand, the one that didn't hold the feathers; and Min started off on a queer journey in her mind, off to Wonderland or some place where you go when it's all too good to be true and you don't know what it's all about.

Boy began speaking, quickly, and Min listened to his instructions, thought out, logical and wonderful, on the spur of the moment.

Yes, what she'd told him about Morgan to-day had done it with him, as far as he was concerned. That is, they were taking the great plunge—him and her. He was going to jump the ship!

Min's heart fluttered and bumped and leapt and

fell downstairs. It wasn't true—but it was true! Here was eighteen quid getting damp in her hand to back it up!

She was to get up to Leith by train—on a real train, a flyer. You start when people are going to bed and travel all night. None of your just-in-and-out business, and she'd have a new hat to go in, and a fish supper before she started, and one of them new leather bags what they sold in the Commercial Road.

And the ring—she was to ask the man in the shop for it, and pay for it and let him wrap it up without her seeing it, and then go off up to Leith, dashing through the night, looking out of the window at nothing, because it was dark; and when she got there, she was going to wait for him. She was going to Leith and to Boy!

Yes, she was to go there to The Thistle (it was just off the docks, he told her) and take a room—and wait for him.

And when *The Spray* got into Leith he was going to jump the ship and nothing was going to stop him, he told her,—nothing! He wasn't a kid no longer . . . and he'd get another ship, or work, or . . .

Anyway, they'd get spliced before they'd do anything, and . . . and . . .

Oh, he was talking so fast and his face had gone red—and they'd be spliced, man and woman, him and her, and he'd kiss her all day and all night and they'd get up just to go to the movies, and

they "could tell the blinkin' world to go to 'ell, they could an' all," and her arms would be round him every minute and she'd never let him go—never, never, never!

Her arms were around him now, straining with excitement. She was laughing and crying. She couldn't speak, and he was pressing hot lips upon her cheek and neck, and her arms were round him, and in one of her hands the feathers waved down his back, gallantly, joyously, a symbol of their pageantry. . . .

And then a scream and some one snatched those feathers, and Min and Boy swept apart as Marian, crimson-cheeked, pulled back and swung at her:

"You bloody thief!"

And then Min at her like a streak, hair, hats and flying heels, and Boy, bewildered, shouting, tugging, at two bodies, one plump and one thin, and the crew laughing, cheering above. The bank notes, the eighteen quid, fell on the ground and blew towards the mud with Boy after them; the crew cheering again.

Marian was down and five of the crew were holding Looney Luke back, above.

Then Boy into the scene again, his arms about Min, where they should be, but this time pulling, entreating a Min who would not rise—no, not even for him. "This cow had stole her present—his present, and . . ."

A shout, a rough hand upon Boy's collar, a choking sensation in his throat. He was lifted and

flying through the air. He hit some kegs and lay still, and Dog Leyton, standing over him, watched bleary-eyed, as Boy struggled to his feet.

"Get aboard!"

Boy looked off to where his father pointed, and then down quickly at his closed fist, in which were hidden eighteen quid; and something more was hidden in that fist—the first spark of revolt sweated through its pores. He wasn't ready to get aboard, just for a moment! He gazed at his father and at his father's arm, still pointing, wobbling, to *The Lady Spray*. His eyes flashed a momentary defiance.

Morgan drew near and smiled, and Boy's lips opened to speak words that would end it.

But how could he? Min dashed in, mounted on her anger in full charge, a dragoon, fearless, gallant, glorious! She pulled up quickly. Her anger reined upon its haunches.

"It wasn't Boy's fault, Captain Leyton. Ye can blame me!"

"You? Get away! I don't want no dock sluts around my son or my ship! Keep off! . . ."

A tiny fist drove clean and straight and hit his mouth, and a broken, pointed boot kicked against his shin, and Min, wild-eyed, screaming cursing words that Boy never had dreamed she knew, stopped only when Marian melted enough to help Boy drag his panting little girl to a sitting position upon a keg and hold her there by force. For some reason Dog Leyton turned away.

Glancing after him, Boy hesitated.

Now was the time! Should he jump now?

There was a list in Dog Leyton's gait. He was either drunk or sick; he was drunk. Boy had caught his breath.

Wisdom whispered wisely, "Leith. You will wait till Leith. You don't jump ship at sailing time if you're a sailor."

And there was Luke. Luke had got to bless this here thing—this splicin' of him and Min at Leith; and dropping the bank notes in Min's lap, he bent quickly and kissed her head.

"See ye in Leith. Don't fail now, Min."

He turned towards the ship, strongly, the deliberate act of a man of judgment and resource, a second mate of subtlety and purpose, a gentleman who had evolved a plan for his advantage and advancement, and was carrying it out in a direct fashion, the proper way.

All this was apparent in the gait of the second mate as he stepped towards his ship.

While Marian hurried the other way, one hand dabbing a fat lip and the other shaking out her feathers, Min looked up dazed.

She should have fainted. She hadn't eaten anything because of the excitement of Boy's coming and because she was saving plenty of room to fill up in Lockhart's; but she didn't faint.

She looked up into the smiling eyes of Morgan, bending over her.

"What a temper! Blimey, ye're hot, ye are!" His hand fell on her shoulder.

She rose and shook him off. "Hands off, smarty, me lad, I'm an engaged woman, I am! I'm Mr. Boy Leyton's financy, and we're splicin' in Leith. Put that in yer smoke an' pipe it!"

And with a sound that was almost a laugh, the little will-o'-the-wisp, all ruffled, blew away as suddenly as she had come, with a backward glance at *The Lady Spray*.

There, in the cabin, Boy was taking off his coat. Hearing his father enter behind him he did not turn. He untied his neckerchief and laid it over the coat as he heard Dog Leyton speak.

"I'd give a trip's pay to see some fight in you!"

Boy turned to see his father looking at him, with genuine contempt upon his face. Dog was drunk. Boy knew his father. Better say nothing and get out.

He moved to do so and as he passed, Dog swung at his ear.

Boy stopped and regarded his father, steadily. It was a moment before he spoke. Never before had he felt so calm, so confident. Never had he felt so much at his ease before his father. The reaction of the moment of defiance upon the quay seemed still upon him.

"Does a real man hit his own father?"

The question was logical. Boy waited for an answer.

Dog was surprised. Boy at least had precipi-

tated something, even though it was only a question, and he made haste to answer it with a step forward. He, too, was under the reaction of an emotion of that afternoon, and that reaction colored his answer vividly.

"A real man kills them what slurs his women!" The words were bitten out.

Boy regarded him steadily. It was hopeless. There before him trembled a drunken, misguided old man, who so obviously was suffering beneath all he said and did, that Boy's heart went to him in spite of everything. All his love swelled within him as he said, simply:

"But I know ye, Father. Ye don't mean yer slurs. It's just yer hate o' women."

At this, for some strange reason, Dog Leyton smiled, a curious, vague, irritating smile. His lips curled their contempt. He fumbled for something terrible to say.

Boy watched him grope. He watched him swaying between two emotions for in that moment when he had smiled, Boy had seen a hole gape open in his armor—something had happened—something had happened that afternoon!

There had been a picture in that smile that whiskey never could have painted.

Boy balanced between two emotions, defiance and love, and the scale jammed suddenly down as all his pent-up restraint broke—in a flood of tears that he could not hold, that rushed to his eyes, blinding him, as helplessly, almost inarticulately,

he fought to express the gorgeous truth within him.

"Ye're my father. Ye kin beat me; ye kin croak me, 'cause ye're my father." His voice choked. "Ye're my own father. See? . . . See?"

His hands went out and his two feet stamped the ground, helplessly, all control gone. He tried to stop speaking and could not. The still face before him seemed every shape and color, distorted, weird, distant, and his hands beat the old man's chest helplessly, as though seeking to beat open an old bolted door with rust upon its hinges.

"Ye're me father, see? And I know ye, see?"

Tears coursed down his face. His hands dropped by his sides, and his head fell upon his father's chest.

His father looked down at him, wonderingly, amazed. He did not understand. Just a kid, blubbing.

Yet, somewhere in the region of Dog Leyton's heart, a whisper breathed that something bigger than a blubbing boy was whispering truth to a truth-starved soul.

When he looked down again, Boy had gone, and Dog's face, which had been hard, relaxed. Then very suddenly and strangely, an unexpected thing happened. A tear appeared in one of his eyes and glistening, swayed, as if ready to drop.

A moment later it dashed to the ground as the tiny cabin shook.

The Lady Spray, unleashed, had turned her head impatiently to sea.

PART III

“God’s maddest dancing daughter she,
The one what every sailor fears,
The icy, love-crossed, mad North Sea;
To me she’s just ‘The Sea o’ Tears.’ ”

—LOONEY LUKE’S POEMS

CHAPTER I

THE North Sea is a peerless creature of passion, yet a daughter of ice, her fury unceasing, foam-capped, shrieking, cold, eternal.

Your warm-blooded, tropical sea has her petulant moments of temper, but then she rests. The North Sea never rests.

Brief rays of sun steal fleeting kisses from her, only to hide immediately behind gray clouds, as if afraid. She will not flirt, this sea; love is not for her!

God loves this daughter as He loves all that He has made, but even He knows the uselessness of chiding her—she is a spinster, barren, sterile, cruel.

Perhaps back, back in the great silence, love crossed her. No one knows.

But since then, even though this be true, sailors during centuries have cursed her, and she has torn their tiny, warm bodies from leaping decks and crushed them to her frozen breast, later to cast them up, swollen and unlovely, upon rugged shores, to fling them contemptuously upon frowning rocks, in grim, unanswerable challenge to puny, conceited, futile man.

The battles of England have raged for centuries upon her bosom, and, if deep in her angry soul a

faint spark of tenderness has ever flickered, perhaps, only perhaps, it has been for this grand old lady of another species, this wrinkled island, rich, kindly, powerful among all nations, most defiant of the dominating flood.

The Old Lady of the Land has now caught her breath, pulled up her shades and in the warming glow begins again to think a little hazily of God, preparing for a new forgetfulness of Him to whom a short time ago she prayed diligently. Again she rouges her wrinkled cheeks, sends for the musicians to play and decks herself with gauds, while some among her children still are piling wreaths around the Cenotaph and others drop flowers upon the restless bosom of the Sea which claimed so many of her gallant mariners. And all this amuses the grim Sea.

Yet some staunch sinews of tradition still cling together in spite of an almost intolerable strain; some still believe that a good King rides beside a Queen radiant with motherhood of splendid children, that some wisdom still exists among men who have struggled to successful refutation of a maniacal assumption of divine right by a semi-stricken, throned buffoon with power of murder but not that of victory—the shout of Wilhelm, Me and Gott!

If the North Sea notices such trifling optimistic signals sparkling faintly in the general murk of a new century's first and (let us hope) most disastrous quarter, it is not with a vivid interest;

she is not impressed. To the North Sea centuries are seconds; well she knows that she must never cease her warfare upon the creatures of this island and on the land itself until the God of Gods in His Millennium shall look upon her waters and give for all Eternity that order which His One Begotten Son once gave for a few fleeting moments to another restless sea—"Peace, be still!"

CHAPTER II

THE North Sea, now gowned in the black of night, a million moon pearls glistening upon her pulsing form, danced, to the music of the wind, a wild bacchanal of icy passion. Her drenching sweat of rain dashed into the face of Boy, singing at the wheel.

The misty moon had cast some gems upon his glistening oilskins. His face tingled, his pulses leaped with *The Lady Spray's*, caught in the dark night in a riotous dance which made her pant, and creak, and groan. "A halt! . . . a halt! . . ." her rigging shrieked. But no!

And Boy rode on. Life was a mad, wonderful, dream-lit thing. He was going to Leith! To Min! . . . To Min and kisses! Ho there! Wash ho there! you wonderful Sea! Boy dances with you! Dance on! Sweep him on . . . to port . . . and Min . . . and love!

A pace away Luke's face, looking up at the moon, shone with a curious light.

It was a wet moon. Luke's poem hummed dully, harshly, through the wind. Boy suddenly remembered it.

"When ye kin pipe the bloomin' moon
And yet the rain is fallin',
Then one of us is goin' soon,
It's Davy Jones a-callin'."

Boy did not shudder; no; he laughed! Who was going? He was! Ha, ha! But not to Davy Jones—to Min! There wasn't any power on earth could stop him—nothing!

He gripped the wheel, and thrilled with that faith that comes to men who know. Min! His Min!

He spat salt water from his mouth and closed his eyes. She stood there now—his Min! She spoke, saying, "I love ye, Boy. You're my boy, ain't ye?" And her hand lingered tenderly upon his cheek—a rough little hand caressing a rough, weathered face. Yes, her hands were rough, her hands were. But he loved to hold them till they dampened in the young warmth of his.

He could feel them now, though he stood there on a tossing ship at night upon the grimly capering old North Sea; and he could feel her little body pressed against his firm muscles, and resting very still. Always, he reflected, something strange would come over him at such moments . . . it might be as if he wanted to cry. . . . No, not to cry. For it was a feeling of curious joy that always had to end too soon with "Good-by; good-by, Boy. God bless and keep my Boy for me!" And the kiss! She always closed her lips tight, Min did, when she kissed him. And then he'd close his eyes!

It was like being drunk, when their lips met, and if he'd open his eyes while he was kissing her he'd see the green depths of hers filling with a different

sort of tears . . . different from sorry tears, you know. He could see right through her eyes, when they were that way, over miles of green . . . green . . . green . . . to a light that was . . . Min! That was Heaven! Then their lips would part, a tear would flick away, and: "Boy . . . Oh, my darling Boy. . . . I love ye. Darlin', darlin', Boy!"

What a bloody mixup it all was! Luke's girl got a wallop . . . pity! And that good-by kiss had been a chill, quick thing. But he'd make up for that, not 'arf he wouldn't! There'd be so many that you couldn't count 'em, all day and all night. He was going to have her all the time, and there wouldn't be no more good-bys. He'd miss them, though, those good-bys. They were wonderful; something to think about, those sweet good-bys!

Eight bells clanged through the wind. *The Lady Spray* leaped, as though it were a signal for a change in the figure of her dance, and Boy, his lips together, held her firmly in her course, and looked off.

His sweeping eyes saw Luke, still looking up. He could stay like that for hours—no oilskins, nothing, wet through—just looking up as though he had asked the moon a question and was waiting for the answer: "One of us is goin' soon, it's Davy Jones a-callin'."

What a creepy thing that was! Who was going soon?

Boy commenced to sing suddenly:

"Sweet Adeline. . . . My Adel-line,
At night, dear 'eart,
Fer ye I pine. . . ."

He could not hear himself, but he continued . . .

"In awl my dreams,
Yer fair face gleams,
Yer the pri-hide h' of my 'eart,
Sweet Adel-line."

Then the wind began to sing it, then the rigging,
then the wash. The night was alive with song.

". . . h' of my 'eart,
Sweet Min, Min, Min."

CHAPTER III

WHILE Limehouse slept, still wearing its tawdry gleaming jewels of paste, and shadows stole from their lairs, Limehouse seemed to hear the faint bat of distant, dreadful wings, and turning in its troubled sleep, it feared to open its eyes and lay panting, still, afraid to look . . . afraid to die.

A woman screamed, shrilly, and piercingly . . . and then silence again, save for the gentle breathing of the sleeping ships. Again the woman screamed and it was Min's scream. "Let go o' me, ye cow; I'll brain ye!" Through the partly opened door of The Sailors' Rest could be heard a scuffle; then a low voice spoke:

"I was watchin' for ye. Do a bunk, would ye? I'll see ye dead at me feet, first!" The voice of Mother Brent rose to a shrill pitch as a man's voice, gruff and commanding, spoke, trying to interrupt.

"'Ere, take yer 'ands off that girl. She ain't yer child. You've got no claim by the law."

The voice was drowned by the woman's shrill crescendo: "Ye got the law on yer side, but . . . take that! Let go my arm, you dirty brute. . . . She's . . . she's . . ."

The door of The Sailors' Rest suddenly opened

wide and two figures emerged, one very tall and the other very short. The door slammed . . . and Min walked quickly down the street from her late residence accompanied by a tall policeman.

As they turned into Poole Street at the corner, they heard, back in the distance, behind the door which had just banged, something that sounded like a muffled, moaning cry, and Min, looking up into the serene face of her tall benefactor, smiled.

Ma had fallen down; that was a dead cert. She was drunk and she'd taken a nice toss for herself. Ha, ha! Over the 'at-stand in the 'all, more than likely! And maybe she 'ad broken her leg—one of them fat piano legs of hers—perhaps both of 'em, broke 'em off at the knee so that they was 'anging by a piece of skin ('urtin' like 'ell, damn her!) an' she'd 'op on a peg from now, an' when she got drunk she'd keep fallin' down off it and bangin' her head against door-knobs, all the rest of her bleedin' life! Thank 'eavens, Min wouldn't see her no more! No; thank Boy and the copper who was speaking now.

"That's your bus. It's Number 24 ye want. 'Ave ye got a penny 'andy? I've one or two."

Triumph colored her piping voice as she looked up. "Not 'arf, Cop. I got eighteen quid!" It was the voice of Napoleon proclaiming the might of his armies, of Lloyd George at the Peace Conference, of Harding on Inauguration Day. It was the voice of triumph!

The moment mounted to a crest as the bus, a

great, red, roaring bus, stopped and skidded for her, for Min.

She was causing things to happen. She had emerged from suds and sighs and silence into a world that noticed and obeyed; into a world a particle of which belonged to her, to Min.

Perhaps it was because she had a cop with her that the bus stopped, because they both signaled together. She waved her umbrella, the new one with the ivory apple handle on it.

Then the gentleman in uniform, like an attendant blue hussar, handed her onto the step, and another, in another kind of uniform, caught her new brown bag.

"Good-by, Cockie, and ta for what you did! Pinch that old cow if ye ever get a chance."

The bus leaped forward.

Some one inside the bus laughed and another said, "Where you off to, Min?" The speaker, a sailor, stopped asking questions suddenly, as a new brown bag, caught him sharply in the abdomen and something warm and living, with feathers on the top, was plumped down beside him. It spoke; it spoke in a very worldly voice:

"'Ullo, Alf! This is a bit of all right, ain't it? I 'ad to go over the top for it!"

"For what?"

The feathers tilted and a flushed, excited face looked up into his. "Not so loud, sporty. It'd get into the society papers."

"What would?"

"Guess."

Alf leaned forward and bathing her in beery breath whispered something and hiccoughed knowingly. A moment's pause and she answered him:

"Yer right first go off, Alfie. I'm off to Leith, and . . ." She stopped to hand a penny to the conductor. And then . . .

No one else in the bus was speaking. They swayed stiffly with its motion, amazed, watching an unusual sight. Here they were in a bus, on a wet night, going along the East India Dock Road, feeling becomingly and respectably sober, or drunk, tired and wet, and there, there sat a young girl, with a flushed, happy face and dancing eyes, who was telling that sailor that she was too happy to talk and that life had only just started, and that love was warm and beautiful and she never wanted to die!

Blimey! What was the world coming to!

Min, breathless, stopped speaking and gazed around at the dirty, shiny faces watching her. Two were smiling, one was asleep, and the others, utterly amazed, were looking at her.

And she sensed the feathers waving on her head, and smelled the tan of the new brown bag, and felt the ivory handle of the new umbrella soft and warm in her hand.

She swayed easily with the bus, a queen in her chariot, dashing forth through conquered lands, surrounded by stately courtiers. She thrilled in the warm glow of queenly well-being.

Was she not going in state to meet her king?

And in the rumble of the wheels she could hear people—her people, billions of her subjects—cheering, as she and her imperial conveyance swept along and around and . . . into the Commercial Road.

CHAPTER IV

THE wind song filtered into the tiny cabin, lending a droning obligato to the voice of the sea captain speaking thickly across to the first mate seated in the half-shadow, just beyond the table upon which rattled the partly-filled glasses beside a tall jar of rum.

A changed, weird, unseamanlike-looking old man, with a lot of hair falling down his veiny forehead, Leyton, his forearm upon the table, spoke through the smoke, his eyes half-closed. Events—and years of drink—were shaking him.

“—so ya see it may be as I won’t make the ship out of Leith. An’ in that case it’ll be you what’ll be takin’ her out agin. See?”

The man in the half-shadow assented in a “Yes, Captain” without moving.

There was a moment’s silence as Leyton drained his glass. The stimulation of the liquor’s bite sounded in his voice as he spoke again: “An’ it may be as it might take my mind ter leave this ship for good. See?”

“Yes, Captain.”

Morgan’s glass remained full; Leyton rose and filled his own. Glancing from it to Morgan he hesitated. He wanted Morgan to ask why he mightn’t make the ship out of Leith. And Morgan didn’t

ask. It wasn't like him to ask anything, that is, with his mouth. His eyes were always asking something—everything. But now the Captain, choking with something he wanted to say—something that made his hand tremble as he raised the thick ship's glass to lips which were peeling and dry—wished Morgan would encourage him by word-of-mouth inquiry.

A pause, as the Captain's eyes searched those of the first mate and Morgan's answered, challenging. A duel of eyes! If Morgan had known that his Captain was merely waiting for an invitation to explain the reason for his break in plans, would he have blinked nervously as he did, leaned forward to pick up his drink and, with a saluting movement, held it before his mouth, untasted, waiting till the other spoke?

"A surprise to ye, eh, Mr. Morgan?"

Now Morgan drank, and placed his glass upon the table where it began again to tinkle.

"I seem to have got beyond being surprised at anythin', cap'n. You're the skipper and if yer want ter jump ship you'll jump. That's how it appears to my way of thinkin'!"

Leyton drained his glass, rose and, going behind the table, stood before his first mate, his hands deep in his pockets.

The motion rocked them curiously. They were like children playing on a seesaw, only they did not laugh and scream.

"You're a cold fish, Morgan."

"Well, you're 'ot enough fer all of us, Cap'n."

Leyton, absorbing to himself a subtle sense of compliment from this remark, smiled. Sober, even he could not have missed the underlying jeer; but he was drunk, and quickly encouraged to impulsiveness.

"We've been shipmates a long spell now, Mr. Morgan." He sat down with an effort, gripping the arms of his own special chair, breathing heavily.

"An' I'm goin' ter be 'otter, Mr. Morgan, 'otter than I've bin, an' I won't deny as I've been 'ot all these years since . . ."

He paused again as he approached his subject. Morgan hadn't asked for it, as he had hoped he would, but he was going to hear it all the same. It was only a day or two now before Leith and it couldn't be held. Some one had got to listen and there was no one but Morgan. The Captain breathed heavily, thinking; he looked up as Morgan changed the crossing of his legs, the left going to his right knee.

"Remember 'er, Mr. Morgan?"

"Who?"

"'Er! Don't ask who. You know well enough who."

Morgan uncrossed his legs. It was almost as if he was preparing for something that concerned him personally. He was too much in the shadow for the other man to see the change upon his face.

And anyway Leyton was looking off as if he had repeated something that another self had whis-

pered—that other self that had stood beside his chair for twenty years pouring out drinks so that it might dull its suffering and protect itself against the confessions which sober, unrestricted agony might wring from a tortured soul by degrading possible speech to drunken mumbling; the unseen self that sometimes pricked his eyes until tears came; that sometimes smiled but more often jeered—waiting—waiting for what?

“Why, ’er—I mean Mrs. Leyton—’er that I was mad at. She liked you, Mr. Morgan. She always liked you. You know that.”

Morgan made no remark.

“I guess you knew she did. Yus; she’d always got a smile fer yer, she ’ad—sometimes, I remember, I used ter wonder why, ’cause ter my mind ye’ was never nuthin’ of a lady’s man—ye never made ’em laugh ner nuthin’.”

“She ’ad a pretty kind er smile, too, ’adn’t she—a kind er pretty smile!”

Leyton looked away as though the other self had touched him lightly on the shoulder and said “Look!” and as if, obeying, he had seen a girl smiling at him—a vague and misty figure, but a girl right enough with very large eyes and a lot of dark hair blowing, and something, either it was rain or tears dashing down her face. But she was smiling; yes, she was smiling.

For a time neither man spoke. The mute Morgan sat strangely somber, watching a silent old man who appeared to be looking away at some-

thing which made him blink his eyes, something that Morgan could not see. He watched with a cold steadiness as his Captain turned to fill his glass again, this time to the brim with straight rum. After he had drained it, he looked off again. When he turned it was impatiently with a toss of his mane and a fan of his paw, as though the thing he sought he could not find and so, therefore, he had given up the search.

The accompaniment of the wind changed its tempo suddenly; the cabin filled as if with the eerie strains of oboes—millions of them sounding like one.

"I've 'ad news."

"Oh!" This time Morgan had to say at least that much because the other waited with eyes fixed upon him in even more intense insistence.

"I know where she is—where she is now."

"Yes?" Again silence forced at least a monosyllable.

"You wasn't the only one she smiled at in those days, Morgan. She liked you 'cause you were my shipmate. That was natural enough; but she was smilin' at some one else. I guess yer know that, too."

Morgan's eyes showed the gleam of growing interest. He had found her. Well, how had he found her? And what was he driving at now?

"Who else was she smilin' at, Cap'n? Who was it?"

"What?"

"I said who? Who was it?"

Leyton, his lips tight and white, poured out another drink. Morgan's voice raised a little:

"I was askin', Cap'n, who else did she smile at?"

Still Leyton did not answer. Instead, he drank, holding the liquor in his mouth before he swallowed it and then sinking back into another silence, which Morgan's voice broke heavily when he could wait no longer.

"What's the news, Cap'n?"

"She's in Leith!"

"She is, heh!" Morgan's voice sounded natural enough.

"Yes. And down and out—and old an' drunk!" The glass in the Captain's hand dashed to the table and smashed, so that only one was left to sing. Leyton did not stop speaking: "That's why I'm gettin' off at Leith, that's why! Now d'yer know why? Do yer?"

"Goin' ter take 'er back agin, Cap'n?"

Leyton's hoarse shout interrupted him: "Ye're mad! Take 'er back? Ye're mad! Never!"

He rose to get another glass and filled it. Then, glancing at Morgan's glass, still almost full: "'Ere, drink that!"

Mechanically Morgan drank, his eyes never leaving the trembling sodden figure of the captain while it sat soggily and spoke again:

"Yer think I'd take 'er back? Ever? Yer think I would? . . . Do yer? . . . Do yer? . . . Me?"

The other leaned forward to set down his glass and as he spoke his voice seemed casual enough.

"Yer said ye were goin' ter, didn't ye? I thought I 'eard yer say that."

"Mr. Morgan, when she went, the day she went, I pegged out—I died. Me body and me 'ands and stomach kept on goin' 'cause I didn't blow me brains out or take a jump fer it; but I've been dead for the whole twenty years.

"Yes, fer twenty years I've bin dead and now I'm stinkin'—stinkin' dead to 'er! I'd 'uv 'ad meself buried, as I should 'a done, but I 'ad somethin' ter do. D'yer understan' me? Somethin' ter get done with first!"

Morgan sat low in his chair as the voice stopped. Now he really was interested—strangely. And less worried, one would guess. It wasn't like the old man to talk much about anything. Never had been. But even the crew had noticed something different this run. Something had happened back in London. And now, getting drunk proper, he was letting himself go. He was at it, talking, talking!

"I couldn't get no track on 'er—or 'im as took 'er. An' never 'ave since. They 'opped it clean. Both on 'em. She was as artful as a cargo of monkeys, that girl was. They never left a trace, an' every one said ter me—every one said, 'fergit 'em, Dog.' If yer remember, yer said that yerself ter me, 'fergit 'em.' Didn't yer? . . . Didn't yer?"

"Yes, I somehow call to mind I did." Morgan leaned forward—curiously. Why was Leyton going to Leith if he wasn't going to take her back? He'd started all this talk, calm and logical, about him, Morgan taking the ship out after Leith. And now here was the old man looking like some twitching red monster, likely to take one of them fits again, talking like he used to talk years ago about being dead, and her and him as took her. What was behind it all? What was the old 'un driving at?

But he eased, mind and body tension loosening. What did it matter? Leyton was stark mad. It was only a question of time. Let the silly old blighter rave! To Hell with him!

Leyton was leaning forward. "Now I've got my chance; I've got it and when it's over, I'll kick in and die proper, an' take a nice sleep and a long one."

Morgan felt better now. Yes, the old 'un was mad—that was all. Here was the thing to say:

"Don't talk that way, Skipper, yer good fer a long spell yet."

His voice had become throaty and light; as he rose he poured himself out a drink, repeating: "A long spell yet—an' here's to it!"

And standing to his full height he nearly touched the deck above with his head, as he raised his quarter-filled glass. Ha! Ha! The old 'un was mad!

And the old 'un sat still and pushed his glass

forward to be filled to the brim by his first mate; his shipmate of twenty-five years; his shipmate whose mind had now again reverted to its usual cynical calm and who thought again, "the old 'un's just mad drunk—ready to take another of them leaping fits that always look to be his last."

And he, Morgan, would have to take and pick him up and get his breath and touch his sticky flesh . . . and he hated the old swine!

It made him sick. He hated him too much. He always had hated him, since—well, since he'd been and got in first with that crazy beauty, that mop-haired wonder girl from Milwall—the one that the old 'un had just said used to smile at him, Morgan—the one that he picked up from the scuppers, in the rain, an hour before the old 'un's brat was born!

He almost trembled now at the memory of the glow of warmth the touch of her body against his had sent through him even in that freezing rain.

And that thrill had started something, hadn't it? Yes, that business had started something all right. Well, well, it was life, anyway. And look! Here was the old 'un, that poor old bag of bones and booze, still at it, raving! Hark to him!

"Mr. Morgan—"

There was a new and a compelling note in the Captain's voice that made Morgan once again look sharply.

It was "mad" Dog Leyton speaking, now. He had changed again. He had come back, red, ill,

but savage and all there, his brown teeth showing white foam in the gaps between them.

"Mr. Morgan," he repeated, as with a sudden lurch he seized the other's coat. "It's come at last! I've got 'im in my hand!"

Morgan turned, looking down. "Who've yer got?"

"The dirty swine that took 'er!" And a burning grip of steel tightened on Morgan's arm. "The swine I've waited for ter kill!"

Morgan's face did not change, but as his gaze lifted carefully the other rose and spoke into his face:

"I'm goin' ter find 'er and I'm goin' ter beat 'is name out of 'er! An' I'll follow 'im, an' find 'im, an' fight 'im—"

"Oh!" Morgan relaxed tremendously within, a little, even, on the surface.

Leyton, panting, paused. Then both hands caught Morgan's shoulders and the voice was loud and hoarse.

"An' I'll kill 'im! . . . Kill 'im! An'—"

The hands dropped suddenly. Breath came with difficulty; but the Captain was almost calm again.

"An' if I don't make this ship out, you'll know that I've been worsted. But it'll be a fight. It'll be a fight!"

He looked through closing eyes away and saw a courtyard paved with cobbles from between which bits of green peeped; and he seemed to hear hoarse shouts of encouragement behind him; he moved a

foot which clanged with heavy armor, and both hands grasped his sword.

He saw a hated thing with visor down and armor black as night advancing towards him.

His body quivered, his grip loosened and the sword clattered to the ground. He would kill this thing with his hands! He would crush this black and loathsome specter; he would tear this sinister thing apart with his hooked fingers!

And then it was gone, and the wall of the cabin moved up and down slowly, before his vision; Morgan was picking up a glass that had fallen to the ground when the sword did, and Leyton's voice filled the cabin with a loud cry.

"I could almost see him! He was there, standing before me—there! . . . I could almost feel his throat like—like—"

And his red hands closed and gripped themselves until his own eyes rolled, and he leaned heavily, panting, against his special chair.

Then Morgan asked a question.

"Have you any suspicions as to who it is—as to who the man was what done this thing ter yer?"

As Morgan waited for the answer, for some reason, he took a step back, so that his body might balance, poised in an attitude which almost seemed like physical readiness.

Eyes, red and blood-shot, met Morgan's. Expressionless eyes, that gleamed suddenly . . . gleamed suddenly and then went out again . . . and then looked very red as the shaggy head shook violently

and a look of searching wonder deepened upon Leyton's face.

"No! He'd be rotting, dead, now, if I did know! If I had known! But I can't die before killin' 'im. . . . I won't. . . . I won't! That's why I'm goin' ter find 'er and beat his dirty name out of 'er. And when she spits it I'm goin' ter find 'im, an'—"

The torrent ended in a gurgle. Something choked him . . . and Morgan caught his Captain's arm and helped him to sit breathlessly, his legs swinging backwards and apart, his red, rum-striped nostrils distending.

Bloody old fool! And above him Morgan's face gleamed, smiling. Courage came; the courage of the coward out of danger; and there was banter in the voice that said, lightly, conversationally: "So she's in Leith, heh?"

Leyton's hand went to his back trousers pocket and drew forth a black purse with a tiny steel clasp. He could not open it, because his hands were trembling, so his shipmate did it for him, and drawing forth a piece of crumpled paper, Morgan read at a glance:

"MacFarlane's Rescue Home,
Waterfront,
Leith."

He laid it upon the table, before the old 'un, who was sitting very still.

So she was there, was she? Some one 'ad been

doin' a bit of rescuin', and 'ad copped 'er fer a prize packet! Rescued 'er fer what? What a world this was! She oughter been dead! What was there to rescue? And what for? Why save her? She was all worn out and drunk and bent! Rescued! Hell!

And old doddering Dog, drunk, going to beat 'er! Ha, ha! Beat 'er fer the name of some one! An' when she'd said it, old Dog, this drunken, tottering fool, was goin' ter take the name and find the bleedin' owner so's to choke 'im! Ha, ha!

Morgan's smile broadened to a grin and actually held there, even when he saw that the Captain's eyes were fixed upon him.

"What yer grinnin' at?"

"Grinnin'?"

Dog Leyton struggled to his feet. "Yes, grinnin', damn yer!"

And then, with amazing audacity, Mr. Morgan sat and crossed his leg, looked up and actually laughed!

"What is it, Mr. Morgan? What's the joke?" Dog's head lowered and two hard eyes gleamed; there was no sag in the body that took a step forward.

The smile on Morgan's face passed suddenly, for a ferocious, sinister thing stood over him.

He had laughed too soon. This old fool had come back. Dog Leyton for a long time had had a trick of throwing off twenty years with his coat and here he was. His head had gone down and was

moving slowly from side to side, and didn't look any too gentle. There wasn't any one who wouldn't be afraid of Dog like this. Yes; Morgan had laughed too soon.

"What is it, Mr. Morgan? Speak up!" Leyton took another step forward. He could get no closer now without—

"I was laughing at the thought of Boy, when he hears yer won't be at his weddin', Cap'n!"

"What weddin'?"

"The one in Leith. 'Ain't he told yer he was gonna jump ship?"

"What fer? What?"

Morgan rose with difficulty, because the Captain stood so near him. He brushed by his stomach as he crossed to the table almost awkwardly. "Perhaps I shouldn't 'ave said nothin', Cap'n, but she told me 'erself!"

"Who?"

"That little tart what you warned off Noak's last time we was in. She works down at The Rest. The one what—"

"What about 'er?"

"Yer boy's jumpin' ship at Leith to splice 'er! So he ain't told yer?"

Morgan was pouring out a drink. It was his third. Now he felt good. He talked on lightly, chattily.

"A little eloping match. Father an' ship don't seem to matter these days. Do they, Skipper?"

He raised his glass.

"Here's to the 'appy pair, I say, the Skipper's son and the—"

The glass was dashed out of his hand, and the hoarse voice of his Captain gave him an order.

And he said, "Aye, aye, sir." And picking up his oilskins, he pulled back the hatch and stepped out into the rain.

But he was laughing . . . and the word went forward that the old 'un must have told a joke for Morgan had passed laughing.

"Garn. 'E was squintin'. The bleedin' rain was in 'is eyes."

CHAPTER V

SO Morgan passed forward to where Boy stood telling Looney Luke to write a poem about him and Min; why not? It was better than that moon song about somebody dying, and Davy Jones. And Looney Luke asked about Leith, and the leap to love . . . and smiled.

Men must strike for happiness, which if lasting must be the bliss of achievement. To seize against odds is to be brave! And brave men live long in life and death upon their spoils. Bravery is a fact, and facts do not lie. To be eternal, one must precipitate fact. Some facts are still-born and unworthy, others live and grow through time. And Boy's happiness was to be the serene content of conquest; his world, a large, small world; his battlefront, a gangplank; his objective—a girl!

So thought Looney Luke as Boy talked on, until Morgan came and stood between them, the dying smile still upon his face.

Without a word he took the wheel from Boy's cold hands. Boy, puzzled, looked up quickly.

"Watch ain't up."

Morgan, putting his oilskins round his neck, smiled again. "Something else is. Captain wants yer."

For a moment, Boy did not move. A vague foreboding numbed him. What had happened?

Almost as if anticipating a question, Morgan had turned his back.

Boy glanced at Looney Luke, who was gazing up at the moon again.

There was nothing to say, so he turned away.

And the rain pattered around him as he went down forward, and the wind sounded like a low cry.

In a moment Boy's sky had become troubled. He even forgot Minnie.

What was up?

He stood still and felt cold. Weather? Rotten; but he never had felt cold before—he never had felt any storm before. Sick? He'd be damned if he'd be sick! You don't get sick sudden-like. What was that? A lantern fell! That was all. It sounded like—

Hell! He'd got the jimjams—a bad touch of them.

What was Morgan laughing at? What?

Ah! He had heard Boy talking about Min in Leith. That was it! And he was laughing about it. Damn him! he *would* laugh.

He didn't know nothing about love anyway. But it wasn't like the old man to change the watch in the dead of night. Why hadn't the old 'un turned in? It was after eight bells. Well, he hadn't turned in last night at all. He'd been talking to himself all night. Boy had heard him, and lis-

tened, and tried to make out what he was saying, but he couldn't hear.

The old 'un wanted him now—what for?

Lonely—maybe! There came to Boy a vague memory of a time, a long time ago, when he was a little fellow, and his father had held him in his arms all night and called him by a woman's name.

Boy always had remembered that **because** it seemed to be from that time that the Captain was after him, punching him, goading him.

A gust of rain hit his face and roused him. He walked forward.

What did anything matter? He was going to Leith, wasn't he? And it'd take a million Dogs . . . or cats, or lions, or tigers to stop him.

He opened the door of the cabin and stepped in, and as he closed the door, the wind thumped it loudly, shutting it fast—tight, as if to dare the world—to interfere—with fate!

CHAPTER VI

MANY miles to Port on land.

A train was dashing into the wet night—a shrieking train, its fire glowing, the curls of its white steam tresses stretching down its straight glistening back in billowing whisps.

On the Yorkshire moors, from a distance, it looked rather like a noisy caterpillar, bent on waking sleeping birds. And nearer cattle started to their feet, blinking, glowering, at this roaring, jeweled breaker of their dreams. An important train, though—through stations only—the Scottish Flyer—the event of the night.

The proud engine raised her chest and screamed her approach.

Some one had whispered to this engine, once, of the speed and size of engines in America, hoping perhaps to check her engine-shed vanity and arrogance. And the Scottish Flyer had tossed her head and replied:

“My dear, they are like savages! Large and swift, but, oh, utterly without culture! They’ve no refinement. Why, they are not even allowed at main stations; they drop their trains some miles from the city and an electric takes them in! Oh, yes, I’ve heard of them. But what of them!”

And the aristocrat of English enginehood had

straightened her long neck and puffed with easy self-satisfaction.

Oh, England! Will nothing replace your growing disdain of larger usefulness? The dogs upon your streets walk slower, only because they are English. Their legs, like those of other dogs across the sea, are straight and lithe and built for speed, but here, the English dog—

“The world is moving too swiftly. It requires the slow sureness and precision of England to calm its tempo to normality and dignity.”

Some traveling hound repeated this to an American dog and he paused and thought for a moment. Then he said:

“England is sure a wonderful country!” and, laughing, ran away with a long, easy lope which was grace itself and fast.

And there was something in his laugh that caused a mother to draw a child to her quickly and say: “Don’t touch that doggie; he’s upset about something, dearie!”

Not for a moment that our Scottish Flyer could or should have proceeded at a faster pace this wet night. Oh, no. Her one fault was her engine-shed vanity, and beyond that there is nothing but praise to bestow upon this proud and useful thing, dashing forward like a race horse into the north, into the night.

The Duke and Duchess of Sutherland and a party were going north to Dunn Robin; also the Duke of Atholl.

Some osteopaths were bound for Edinburgh to attend a bone-setting convention.

The mayor of that city was upon the train, taking without much patience Pussyfoot Johnson, due at a prohibition meeting in Aberdeen the following day.

Also there was Miss Minnie Brent, of London, en route for Leith.

Oh, yes, she was violently consequential; a very pompous affair, that Scottish Flyer, as she screamed and roared, turned her slim shoulders round a bend into York junction and finally came to a reluctant and shriekingly protesting standstill.

In a third class carriage, Min, in a corner seat, held out a trembling hand for the cup of coffee some one brought her with two lumps of sugar in the saucer, and smiled her thanks.

Above her upon the luggage rack, the umbrella, the new one with the ivory apple on it, lay awake, watching, musing, next to the new brown bag, which was fast asleep. Bags were made to sleep on trains; they are born travelers.

But the umbrella had heard the beating rain outside, and longed to open up, and sweep along—blown! A glistening new thing, banging into the other, older, shabbier umbrella with a passing sneer. Life called. Perhaps at Leith it would be raining; and then perhaps it would not be.

What pessimists umbrellas are!

This one had summed up the character of its

new owner and trembled at the thought that it might never be open. Umbrellas are keen things and . . . well . . . from a careful analysis of its brief experience with the little human sitting just below, its deduction was that a fight in which an umbrella would not be such a bad weapon might not be at all unlikely.

And then, again, this new owner more than once, during their brief relationship, had referred to this perfectly good, useful, beautiful umbrella—as “Me brolly.” And that hurt! Every tradition of its umbrallahood was violated by that vulgar reference, and so, uncomfortable and numbed, half under the heavy sleeping, new brown bag, it lay, brooding upon the possibility of a broken neck should that brawl occur. That funny little owner now in the seat below had opened it in the house, early the night before, to show it to some sailors; and every one knows, including umbrellas, that that’s unlucky!

And this umbrella was from a good, middle class, hard-working stock, and there was no reason at all that what was true of other umbrellas should not be true of it. It hoped that the bad luck which must come would have nothing to do with a brawl, but—

Umbrellas are bitter things when their pride is hurt.

It dozed. Now it could not hear the rain because they were in a station.

They were moving forward again. The guard had shut and locked the door, because the man who had brought the coffee tipped him, and Min looked up at his face; he was the only other occupant of the carriage.

He was a tall, sad man, who smiled, and rising, gently placed a warm plaid rug round her knees, tucking it briskly but quite respectfully under her thighs.

Min's eyes never left his face. Her lips were drawn tight. She was waiting—waiting for what? Here this man had been with her alone in the carriage from King's Cross; six hours. He'd given her a book, slept a bit, taken a couple or more swigs of Scotch from a flask, offered her some. She'd refused. He'd slept a bit, closed the windows, smoked like a chimney and spoken only once or twice in a way that sounded as though he'd known her all her blinking life and before that.

He'd undone his boots at the top, and the buttons of his waistcoat where his stomach pushed against it.

He'd sung a bit in tunnels; she'd heard him above the roar. He'd given her a white, clean pillow, which he'd got from a man with a lot of them at King's Cross. He'd picked up her railway ticket when she had dropped it and he'd fiddled with his mustache a lot with the hand that didn't hold his pipe. She had watched it all and waited—waited for what?

She had prayed inside herself while the train was waiting at King's Cross that some one else would get in.

Some one nearly had, but, on seeing this man speak to Min about something, they had withdrawn considerably, and so he and she had started off alone, with a whole seat each, and Min had kept awake watching, waiting—for what?

The roaring night leaped against the windows, wet with rain; and the wheels and rails echoed with measured precision.

Min glanced up. Her feathers waved encouragingly on the luggage rack above her and reminded her of where she was going. She had almost forgotten in the tense hours that had just passed.

She'd only been on a train once before and that was when Salty Barnard had taken her that Sunday last summer on the excursion to Southend, and she remembered that once vividly. Missing the excursion, they had taken a later ordinary train back, and had had a carriage to themselves and Salty had been drunk and, oh—why think of such things?

But the vision of herself alone in a railway carriage with a man had always given her a couple of shudders. She'd used a bottle that night with good effect but this 'ere bloke carried his booze in a flask. The only club she'd have would be—would be—er—the new brolly up there. Pity it was a new one, but what's a blooming brolly when your honor is concerned?

'And the umbrella above her, that could read thoughts, like all other umbrellas, opened its eyes—and shuddered.

Her reverie halted suddenly as a voice spoke. It was a low, soft voice, that reminded her vividly of the Rev. W. F. P. Vane, when he used to call at The Rest and say to her, "Good hahfternoon, Minnie Brent. His your mistress at 'ome?" The soft voice of the man opposite was speaking now.

"Why don't you get a little rest? We've a long time yet."

What was the lay? Did he want her to go to sleep so that he could spring at her—sudden-like? Or—or—

Perhaps he knew that they were going to stop at another station and he had got it in his mind to hop it with her bag and feathers. Or . . . or . . .

Min only knew one kind of man outside Boy and sailors, and Mr. Vane, and that was the man she had read of in the Heartease Library and who was on the stage sometimes in sketches down at the Poplar Hippodrome—and in the movies too—the bloke with a mustache, and the soft voice. And this was one of them all right, all right! She spoke up like the heroine:

"I ain't sleēpin', matey—not with you aroun'!"

A cheer from the gallery as the wheels passed over junction rails, and Min watched the villain smile. He was the goods all right, all right!

A long, noisy silence and clouds of smoke poured from the man opposite.

"Pinkie," Min some time before had christened him mentally because smoke came out of him like it did out of that tall chimney at Pinks Jam Factory down where she used to live. "Pinkie." He was a lad from the city all right; she felt his eyes upon her.

"Is your home in Leith?"

She did not answer at once. He was a nosey villain, this one was; a fly bird; and she snapped out: "No, it ain't. D'you live there?"

Pinkie answered in a deep, polite voice: "No, my home is near London, Croydon. Do you know Croydon?"

Min shook her head and Pinkie continued:

"As a rule it's wonderful to be going home, isn't it? I thought you were going home because you seemed so happy."

How did Min know it was wonderful to be going home? She'd never had one. But she nodded her head. She liked listening to his voice; and then again he was safer when he was talking.

But he had stopped talking and was looking away out of his window; and Min, thinking something was up, looked out of hers.

Vague shadows and ghosts leaped forward and past and frightened her, and her head turned suddenly back.

The villain had a handkerchief out and was blowing his nose.

Min watched him curiously. Something whispered that he hadn't only been blowing his nose.

That might be a drugged handkerchief and perhaps he was going to rush at her.

But now something gave her a sinking feeling, a thickening in her throat. She didn't know why, but she felt sorry for him. He looked funny and his eyes were watery. She broke the silence, asking:

"What's up? Caught a chill?"

He smiled and shook his head. "No. You're observant, aren't you?"

Observant? That meant something tricky. She was suspicious again and yet she was interested. This bloke was a queer kettle of fish. She liked his voice and asked:

"What's observant mean?"

"When you're observant you are quick to see things; quick to notice."

Min felt complimented. She purred. "I've always been that way."

Pinkie smiled, and picked up the conversational note: "I'm glad we're making this trip together."

"Why?"

"Because you're young and pretty, and fresh; and you seem to be on the verge of something. You're so full of hope and life."

Min flushed. "You're complimentary, I must say." Yes, she liked his voice.

"I've watched you all the way and wondered where you were going. Are you going to a new situation?" And his eye glanced meaningly at the new brown bag.

Blimey, what a nerve! What'd he take her for, a blinking slavey? She straightened up quickly.

"No; I'm an engaged woman. I'm going to Leith to get spliced. I'm going to splice Mr. Leyton—Mr. Boy Leyton!"

Pinkie actually laughed. "Forgive me. And allow me to congratulate you both!"

Min, still straight in her seat, inclined her head.

"Thanks; same to you, matey!"

She waited and watched him put down his pipe and lean forward. She drew back.

"Little lady, you're on the threshold of life's sweetest journey. Be happy; love your man. Keep him true and strong. God has given him to you. He is your charge. All men are like babies. They need a woman's arms. Her voice, tender always, her patience enduring. I envy you, little girl, and your wonderful journey's end."

He was talking like a blinking book, but Min liked his voice and it was the kind of gab that didn't lead up to springing at her. His voice lowered:

"I lost my love who was everything to me! She was my life. But although she has left my side for a little while, she's with me every moment—whispering, guiding, comforting. You remind me of her—only you're much younger. She used to sit on the seat opposite, just as you are sitting now, and so we traveled many miles together. Just like this. She and I. You will never leave your man's

side, will you? Come what will, you must hold fast. He is yours; God gave him to you!"

This Pinkie could talk all right and Min understood the last part of what he said. It coincided with her attitude to her Boy exactly. He needed her . . . always! She'd stick, right enough!

She looked away because the thought made her feel like crying; and Pinkie seemed to be thinking too. It was one of those silences that are beautiful moments; and Min picked up the paper to check her tears—the one he had brought in from the refreshment room at York Junction.

Her attention was arrested at once by a headline

NEWCASTLE MURDERER DIES TO-MORROW MORNING

Thomas Morton, 28, Miner, Convicted of Murder of Ernest Spurr, His Watchmate, to Pay Extreme Penalty of Law at Dawn!

Min read on; she liked murder news.

"The murder was the outcome of a long feud between the two men, between whom a woman's name was linked, and the motive pleaded was vengeance. . . ."

Min looked up. Like Morgan and Boy, she mused. Thank God that matter was settled! Morgan's bacon was well cooked, as far as she was concerned. She turned again to the paper:

“Brenton—the hangman from London—was expected. . . .”

That was a funny one—Brenton! Half her name, or rather Ma Brent’s name. “Brent-on,” a hangman! Probably an uncle who’d stuck a blooming “on” on, just to be funny.

The hangman . . . woo! . . . ooo! . . . Min shuddered.

She liked reading this. It was thrilling; and she read on, devouring gruesome details of ignorance, passion, murder and inevitable punishment.

Later the paper fell from her hands as she dozed, dreaming vaguely of the hangman’s noose and Dog Leyton and Ma Brent and Morgan, and hated things, and the hangman’s rope, and then Boy as he sang to her (as almost always in her dreams) “Sweet Adeline.”

The song stopped suddenly because the train did; and a hoarse voice outside shouted: “Newcastle!”

Pinkie was getting his bag and coat. The guard unlocked the door, opened it suddenly, passed on. Min sat up.

“’Ere’s yer rug, matey!”

Pinkie stepped out and turned back to her.

“You’ve some time yet, and it’s cold. Will you accept it as a wedding present? And don’t forget, little lady—stick to your man! Love him and the world is yours!”

Like the song, “Love me and the world is mine,” thought Min. The door slammed suddenly and Min rose and put her head out. Pinkie stood there

in the rain beside his black bag. Two men came up and one spoke:

"Good morning, Mr. Brenton. We were looking for you down first class."

The newly alighted passenger started to reply; and then as the train moved forward, he turned and waved, calling: "Good-by, little lady! Stick tight!"

But Min did not wave. She pulled herself back into the carriage suddenly, her eyes wide with terror. Picking up the paper which had fallen to the floor, she scanned it quickly.

"Mr. Brenton, the hangman from London . . ."

Blimey! And that was Newcastle! She was a Sherlock Holmes all right. Her brows contracted. Pinkie! Pinkie! The hangman! And he talked about love, and Boy, and sticking. She shivered suddenly, pulled Pinkie's rug about her knees, and, leaning back, closed her eyes.

She was out in the world all right! She could hear Pinkie's voice now:

"Little lady, you're on the threshold of life's sweetest journey."

Min sat very still, her eyes closed, trembling, as the hangman's rug fell from her knees to the floor.

CHAPTER VII

SOME men, like some bulls, are ordained from birth to fight in the arenas of sport and life. They are reared in health upon open places and every precaution is taken to insure their ferocious and gallant resistance to the supreme ordeal. But from the start it is all planned that that ordeal shall be final.

Fate, the breeder of men, like the breeders of bulls, knows from long experience that red blood and courage must predominate in their lusty charges if they are to fight in splendid agony and die amusingly.

Fate loves its man-fight. The phantom matadors of such a battle can have no equal in a mere bull-ring; the picadors, the music and the blood upon the sands of time, all are there in pompous pageantry. . . . And perhaps sometimes God in His Royal Box turns his head away, men seem to suffer so, these fighting men, but Fate applauds from tiers and sunnyside. And man fights on, a single man against a bewildering multitude of crimson shadows.

When a woman had dashed her cruel rosette into his pulsing withers and the gate had dropped, Dog Leyton had dashed into mid-arena, a towering, maddened mass. White, whispering horses were

coaxed to flout his horns as folk bade him forget and lowered their voices subtly. He had fought for years, bellowing, pawing, thrusting, left and right, right and left.

And now since Petwee's news of the woman in Leith, he had sensed the approach of a glittering matador, a man who hides behind a cape, with glossy black hair a-curl, with full red lips such as women love and the glinting eye of a thief—a wife-thief—a body broad and long and slim below the ribs . . . advancing . . . bent upon dispatch. . . .

He could not see this man; blood and rage had blinded him; it was his to wait and paw the ground. Soon, soon the haze would clear, the cape would lift or drop. There'd be no passes, no thrills, he'd rip this bobbined upstart for the world to see . . . rip and tear and gore. . . .

His head lowered and a foot came down. He stood still, trembling, ominous, waiting.

But Fate loosed and decreed he was not tired enough yet! Too soon for the matador! A little cloak play yet, another shaft or two in those congealing withers! Good sport, this fighting man! Good sport!

Zas! And the phantom matador paused and turned aside into the shadows . . . to watch a while.

CHAPTER VIII

BOY found his father waiting, silent, by the table. As he entered the smoky cabin and tossed his dripping oilskins upon the Captain's special chair, he advanced with glowing cheeks, still tingling from the wind.

"What's up, sir? Are yer sick again?"

For a moment Leyton did not speak. He advanced a step. Boy stood still, calm and waiting. This was something out of the ordinary. There was a hint of tragedy in the silence. And then his father spoke:

"Anythin' to say?"

Boy hesitated, thought, then shook his head naturally: "No; why?"

"Nothin' ter tell me? Me? Yer father?"

"No; nothing. Why?"

"Liar!" The sea captain's voice broke forth like a sudden peal of thunder when the lightning is overhead.

Boy stepped back.

"Who's a liar? Who? Who?"

"You!"

The father's face was very close now; his breath was upon Boy's mouth and his body quivered threateningly. The breath, hot and liquored, of-

fended Boy and something in the threatening figure before him called his courage up. A changed, strong Boy answered quickly:

"I ain't no more of a liar than you are, see? . . . See?"

The other blinked.

Fine! Here was an answer worthy of his mood. Yes, Boy had answered back. Good!

Boy was still speaking. "What're yer gonna do? Hit me? G'wan! What for?"

"Yer'd jump ship, would yer! Would yer?"

"Yes, I would . . . an' all . . . an' I'm agoin' ter, see?"

He could not talk any other way. The courage of the sea, the courage of love, the courage of a man spoke out.

This was not a father that stood ahead as though to bar his way to happiness; it was an obstacle, a grotesque, flabby obstacle. Had it been other than his father in his subconscious realization he'd have knocked that red face through the bleeding cabin wall! Yes, he would! As it was, he just listened as the obstacle spoke, spitting out the words:

"So yer'd jump ship, would yer, to get mixed up with some dirty—"

A young voice, vibrant, commanding, stopped this.

"Get down! Stop that . . . yer dirty drunk!" And Boy's eyes flashed.

The man who spoke had fire in his eyes and venom in his voice, with muscles below to back

them up. A young Dog Leyton was born suddenly into a violent world.

"It's you what's dirty; it's yer dirty rotten mind!" he spat out insultingly. "Yer dirty, stinkin' drunk!"

And the captain, old Dog Leyton, blinked and stepped back as far as the table, staring at a kid. No; not a kid. A man, young, eager, strong, whose claim to manhood had been long enough deferred.

The sea captain blinked again. At last, after all these years of intimate relationship, something had happened to Boy, that easily dominated, cow-eyed Boy, that Boy with her face, the face that left him.

It looked him in the eyes now with a militant, steady gaze, the exasperating firmness and the maddening note of conviction in the voice.

Ah, the glove was down, was it? . . . Here's to it! . . . At last he'll fight!

But how long? Of what stamina is this new man made?

And with a funny kind of shout the sea captain threw his glass against the wall and backing to the table squared his shoulders waiting. A fight, hey? . . . How much of one? How long? This Boy . . . man . . . what of him? How good?

Hark! Talk, talk! Any one could talk! How good was he?

Yes, Boy was talking. He asked a direct question in the captain's face:

"What did *you* ever know about women? A dirty, blastin', cussin' drunk like you?"

And Boy actually walked forward as he spoke.

"Why, no decent woman would ever live with you! I don't believe yer ever was me father. No woman'd ever know yer well enough to have a kid by yer. It'd make 'er too dam' sick! . . . Yer dirty, rotten! You don't know nothin' about women except ter blast 'em . . . and yer don't blast *my* woman! On yer rotten life yer don't! See? . . . See? . . . She *ain't* dirty! I owe yer one fer the last thing yer said ter her . . . an' I owe yer a lot more'n that, too. Damn yer—damn yer—see?"

A thousand trumpets rang a fanfare through the wind as a gentleman of courage, a champion of women, a lover of kisses and steel, galloped into the open and reined up, his lance aslant, his glove down to any, for the sake of honorable advancement.

The sea captain walked forward and peered into the face of his sailor son. . . . He was a drunken botanist, who had found a black rose. He sagged and fumbled for words, but found none.

And Boy waited too, but as his father did not speak, began again, generating an almost spiritual power as the words rushed from his lips. There was no trace of hysteria in the voice; it was calm, penetrating, cruel in its cold ferocity of denunciation.

"Yer been on at me since I can remember. Yes; an' I'm jumpin' ship, see? I'm jumpin' ter get clear of you an' all yer mean to me! An' I'm me, see? I'm me; an' I ain't no part of you from now on, see?"

The words rang with finality as, beating his own chest, Boy stepped forward uttering his bitter conclusion:

"Gawd in 'eaven! Nobody ever could love you . . . an' keep on an' on. . . ."

Boy spoke on, but his father could not hear him.

"Nobody ever could love you an' keep on an' on!"

The words recurred and swirled about him, making him giddy . . . now near . . . now far away . . . hurrying back from the distance of time like an echo swept up from the forgotten across a vast, misty vista . . . from the past into the present.

"Nobody ever could love you an' keep on an' on!"

It swelled again—that dreadful sentence.

A woman screamed it now. Dog's hands went to his ears as if to check his hearing; but such sounds do not come to ears; they shrieked within his skull and echoed like the beat of eagles' wings against the walls of a deserted church.

The latent fires in Dog Leyton's eyes flickered weakly as he turned.

Boy stopped speaking and waited, defiant, as his father came and said to him, almost quietly:

"It's 'er talkin' in yer. She said them very words! . . . She did!"

Boy asked sharply: "Who did?"

"She did. I loved 'er then—"

Boy pulled away, unmoved. His lips curled as he spoke his sneer.

"You couldn't love nothin' but yerself an' yer rum."

Dog Leyton sagged. The flood of memory rushing had quenched the fire of anger, and left only steaming débris upon his vision. He looked across at his son, now no longer to him anything more than an issue of some vague connection with a woman in the distant past. He gazed across at a stranger of his flesh and blood, but a clear-eyed, convinced and dangerous stranger, pausing upon the road to tell this old man who had lost his way, that he'd better get into the ditch . . . and die! That he was no good to any one, not even if he found his way!

"Yer 'ittin' me at last, Boy! Not with yer fists, but yer 'ittin' me—not with yer 'ands!"

"The truth 'urts worser, don't it?"

Boy's words lashed out. Why wait now? Why talk? The old 'un looked such a silly old fool . . . all soggy . . . a sailor, a sea captain! Ha, ha! Looked more like one of them old musicians what busked on Saturday nights outside The Jolly Sailors.

"*Captain* Dog Leyton—Gawd!"

And he and others had actually feared this

mumbling old sot! Why wait? It was over, for good and all; and if there was any more lip out of this old swine, he, Boy, would give him what he had always asked for, a crack on that bristling old jaw of his. Yes, and one on the raspberry nose for luck!

Boy was picking up his oilskins. He'd finished with the sea. He turned, as a sound escaped the old 'un, and looked back at his father.

Good cloak play this . . . but the man in the arena was breathless, sagging. Would he drop before . . .

The phantom matador, waiting in the shadows, stamped his foot impatiently. Would death cheat him at the moment of his triumph? No! No! Because Fate yells, "The fire! . . . The fire! . . ."

The old 'un turned back to the table and tremblingly picked up his glass. Pointing to the jar of rum, he bid his son with a gesture fill it for him, because he knew he himself could not. His hands were trembling so.

And this was the Captain of the ship, and the young sailor whom he addressed was second mate, and so, of course, the Captain was obeyed and the glass was filled by the second mate. It was drained at a gulp.

Then the second mate again picked up his oilskins, swinging them over his arm with almost disrespectful jauntiness. But at the door he turned, because his Captain spoke.

"Did yer know yer father was jumpin' ship at Leith, too?"

"You are? Why?"

It was a moment before the answer came; an answer that wept softly to itself.

"Yer mother's ailin' an' wants me!"

The young sailor started suddenly.

"Me mother?"

His mother! For the first time his mother. It had always been "'er"—"'er"—"'er"—"that cow"—"that—"

But now the sacred word of "mother" pealed out in the tiny cabin like the throbbing note of an organ in a church in the evening.

Then father and son gazed into each other's eyes and the son watched his father weep, as the cruel callous of years fell from his heart and stripped him naked, leaving him ashamed.

The mouth opened softly and tried to speak and tears coursed down a weathered, wrinkled face.

Bowed, helpless, tragic, weeping . . . a man, a big-framed man, a captain of the sea, standing before a tribunal of three . . . a ghost . . . his son . . . and himself . . . trying to articulate such words as "forgive," "love," "mother," "wife," "son," "please," "mercy," . . . words he'd only sensed . . . words he did not know and, like a baby, could not speak.

Boy's voice, tender and soft, broke the silence:

"Me mother—where is she?"

It was a moment before the answer came, while Dog Leyton piped his slacking senses back to action and stood erect.

"In Leith!"

Boy spoke quickly: "An' yer goin' ter see 'er . . . in Leith?"

Dog Leyton was by the table, looking away; and then he turned suddenly, on fire again. . . . The fire! . . . The fire!

The cape which had seemed still for an instant, as if from pity, swung quickly into new activity. The crowd had roared "The fire!" and fire it had; the fighting man was in another frenzy. Fate screamed its mad delight. Good sport, this man!

With a cry, Dog Leyton dashed the table on its side.

"I'm goin' ter find the swine what took 'er, an' left 'er, an' lied to 'er!"

Yes, he's quite mad, now. Gripping at an imaginary man, he tears at the air; his hoarse voice shouts:

"An' I'll rip 'im an' I'll tear 'im—I'll—"

Hands of steel had caught Boy's throat. He cannot see who it is; he is choking; his strength is as a baby's.

The voice shouts: "Rip 'im, tear 'im . . . tear 'im!"

Suddenly the hands relax their cruel hold, the sea captain catches at the collar of his shirt as though to wrest away ghost fingers that are tearing at his throat, and leaping into the air he pitches

forward, down upon his face! Down upon the floor . . . and lies there very still!

Boy knelt down beside him. Sounds came from him; stifling, sobbing sounds.

“Father! My father! Oh, father! Father! . . .”

CHAPTER IX

VAGUE, fleecy clouds swept past the pale profile of a weeping moon. The wind veered. The rain hesitated. The sea paused for breath. And Looney Luke, who knew these things, peered forth into a night of ghosts and sighs, an eerie, moody night of things that passed unseen.

He closed his eyes as if waiting for something; his dripping shirt clung to his thin, warm frame, its wet sleeves clapping ridiculously in the wind.

Looney Luke prayed.

"Oh, God, this night you're with us fer proper. I feel yer breath upon me cheek. I feel yer will. Yer needn't speak no more. But the lad what comes to yer arms to-night . . . kiss 'is cheek and hold 'im tight! Whether he is from *The Lady Spray*, or a ship an 'undred miles away . . . for Jesus' sake, amen!"

Opening his eyes, Looney Luke sighed, with the sweet content of one who has laid his burden on the shoulders of a strong friend. He knew the way across the fallen leaves, into the peaceful glades of perfect thought. He turned now at the sound of voices when Mr. Hop spoke quickly to Morgan at the wheel.

"Better come down right away. Quick!"

Morgan called Luke and after giving him the wheel and a curt order, turned off down, asking a hurried question which Mr. Hop was answering; but the wind took their voices away.

Outside the cabin door they pushed past hands, mysteriously informed that something had occurred, standing talking, hatless, some coatless, in the rain.

Inside Morgan walked quickly forward to where his Captain lay very still and looked down upon the débris of a body.

In Morgan's glance there was nothing—nothing more than the glance one gives to a beetle just crushed beneath a boot, its delicate, inert frame sticking to the floor, its arms outstretched, pleading to the Beetle God to end its agony.

Boy, kneeling by the bunk, had not looked up at their entrance; but he had sensed the identity of the tall shadows cast upon the wall beyond. No one spoke until Mr. Hop looked up from another brief examination.

"Can't do nothin'. It's just to wait, that's all!"

Boy would have arisen, but his father firmly held his hand and lay there still, his eyes closed and his face strangely blue.

"What're yer a doctor fer, if yer can't do nothin'?"

Mr. Hop did not reply. But Morgan spoke for him. "There's times when the doctors themselves can't do nothin'."

Boy's head turned again to his father who had

moved slightly. He did not see Morgan glance down upon the floor to where a scrap of paper lay with an address written upon it, reach quickly down, secure it and place it carefully in his pocket.

What did any one want with an address like MacFarlane's Rescue Home? What—

The captain's voice spoke softly, a painful wheeze in it.

"Get out. I'll talk to Boy."

Without a word, the first mate left with Mr. Hop.

Outside the men asked with their eyes: 'ad the old 'un killed 'imself? . . . gone daffy? . . . dropped dead?

That'd make Morgan skipper now!

The old 'un was 'ot, but this tall, silent, superior cuss, . . . not much! There'd be another ship ter find fer some of them.

And they peered through the rain as Morgan, talking quietly to Mr. Hop, passed along with almost a jaunt in his stride, as though even now he were master of *The Lady Spray*.

And she, herself?

The Lady Spray seemed to know that something was changing within her. Her ship's heart beat thumpily; ship-like, she shuddered irritably at the light uncertain hands that turned her head again and again from her course, which she could have gone alone, she knew so well, as Looney Luke forgot the wheel and the world to gaze wistfully at the moon.

The weather started up again and with a vengeance. The wind set up a howl and sadness set upon all sides as a black cloudbank veiled the moon in crepe.

Boy, kneeling, heard the moan outside and shivered. His father, speaking almost easily, had told him a lot, in measured, even phrases and he, Boy, understood.

In those brief moments, his father's hand in his, he'd met his mother. Her pale, sweet face had been painted in his father's whispered words; the tragedy of age touched his cheek and bleached it. Boy was afraid to interrupt. He'd forgotten that his father stood no more, but lay tired, breathless. He was painting vivid, definite pictures of the might-have-been. It was a dream, all of it. This was not his father . . . no! He had entered a weird cavern where strange voices whispered of things he vaguely knew about; where the two pale ghosts of a girl and man kissed and peered away, waiting for what? For happiness? No! It could not be, because she swept away to leave the man who loved her, but could not show her how much, calling, an angry, agonized call.

And only the echoes answered mockingly—and then the man went mad and fell, and lay here beside him on the bunk . . . and was bidding him . . .

Leyton struggled and raised himself with his arms.

He did not speak at once. His eyes were asking

a question, which was answered in the other eyes, that said:

"Anything . . . anything you may ask, father! I'm your son. I love you! Bid me!"

At length Leyton spoke: "I'm done, Boy. . . . Some water."

The burning throat cleared gratefully as Boy placed the empty glass upon the floor.

"Swear you'll find 'im . . . the one what took 'er . . . swear!"

The steady young voice answered him: "I swear!"

"Swear on the soul of yer father, down below!"

A sudden cry, as Boy's head fell forward: "No; no . . . you ain't goin'! It's one of them passin' fits. You ain't goin' ter die!"

With amazing strength his father lifted Boy's head and held it between two rough wet hands, almost firmly.

"Swear you'll not marry no one, that you'll do nothin' till you've found 'im!"

"Father, I swear. . . I swear!"

The oath broke off into a sob. "You look funny, father! I'll get 'Op—Lemme go! Lemme go!"

But the hands gripped him like a vise.

"You'll marry no one . . . you'll do nothin' till you've found 'im and paid 'im."

Boy tugged at the hand that held his head.

"No, no! I won't do nothin'. See?"

The man on the bunk continued doggedly: "Hold

up yer 'and an' swear yer won't do nothin' until you've got 'is throat like . . . like . . ."

A gurgling rattle . . . the voice trailed away . . . and Boy laid his father back, calling loudly: "Mr. Hop! Help!"

But the wind outside, laughing now, drowned the voice.

He could not move because his hand was held in the grip of death. He bent forward and over: "You ain't gonna die! Yer goin' to Leith, to mother! Yer goin'—"

He stopped as two eyes opened and looked at him . . . two calm, vague eyes but lighted. His father spoke:

"Boy . . . I've loved ye all the time."

The eyes held, still looking up; dear, wonderful eyes that must not go out; eyes, with fathomless depths of love—

"All . . . the time!"

Boy's eyes flooded with tears.

"No, no!"

Young tears dropped . . . pat, pat . . . on his father's cheek and mouth.

"Father! Don't! Yer can't. Yer goin' ter mother! Ter mother!"

Then a heavy movement. Two big arms fell around his neck and crushed, and pulled him down, down against a cold, cold face, and a rasp in his ear said:

"Kiss . . . 'er fer me!"

Two burning lips found his, full upon his mouth, and held . . . and throbbed . . . and stiffened. One breath, a burning sigh, came upon his mouth, and scorched. . . . A tumbled, gray head rolled back . . . down as from a mountain . . . back upon his shoulder.

The moon cleared, full and white. A silver avenue from the sea led to the skies . . . inviting, free . . . and Luke saw a light pass slowly up and out beyond . . . a light that in its passing left Boy huddled, and alone,

PART IV

"Oh, God he is a funny bloke,
His moods they puzzle me—
But always he comes smiling up,
At dawn across the sea!"

—LOONEY LUKE'S POEMS

CHAPTER I

UNCERTAIN gray gave gentle place to rose. The world seemed waiting. Far out to the east, sullen black rollers, with whimsical green smiles breaking upon their crests, green, white and gold. . . . Then of a sudden the world awoke, as dawn flamed up.

And then it was, as Looney Luke wrote it the following night in his book:

“This ain’t a bloomin’ poem, like the other things I write. I don’t know what it’s going to be—I’m writing through the night; the kind of night that follows on a day of tears and sighs, the kind of night that seems to say, ‘Man’s finished when he dies.’”

Here Luke’s book showed a series of crossed-out beginnings. And then, suddenly, the scrawl proceeded again, savagely, spitefully. . . .

“A gin-mad mother dropped ’er baby on its ’ead. . . . I saw, I watched—’er silly grin when they told ’er it was dead. I watched a muddy Malay once slit his mother with a knife. And I stood and watched at Tilbury when a sailor drowned his wife. I see because I’m looking—I want to look at Life.

“My eyes dim very often and things have made me weep, when I parade my living thoughts at

night upon the deep. But only once in all my life I've asked my God a query. And I've been sick like other men, and sad, in love and weary. But what could Boy have ever done, that 'e should suffer so . . . when Dog Leyton went below?"

It must have been some time before Luke began to write again, because the pages were wet and creased. Then started a new page. . . .

"And now to set down what I saw at dawn, when Boy looked down to find his father gorn.

"Slowly they came ahead . . . and Captain Morgan led . . . and right behind his back . . . under the Union Jack. . . . Dog Leyton, wrapped in sack . . . and shadows played at hide-and-seek, on the naked back of Zeis the Greek . . . and I could hear the sweet-voiced sea sing 'Rock of Ages Cleft for Me.' . . . A hairy, heaving, troubled breast was cool and still in death's deep rest . . . and nightmare's torture turned to sleep . . . forever down where sailors keep their peaceful watch in fathoms deep.

"I smiled . . . Clancey riled . . . and kicked my ankle as they passed ahead. . . . I did not walk. . . . I do not follow dead. . . . I stood aside and watched them go . . . poor, blinded humans walking slow . . . in Death there's never-ending joy. . . . But look! who follows last . . . it's Boy!

"An' stepping round behind the hatch I knelt, and prayed awhile, for him.

"When I arose the sun was blazin', out to the

west the sea was hazin', as if in respect it had drawn its veil. . . . I turned—I heard a long, low wail. . . .

"The sea played the organ to Hop's thick voice; Hop's own service had been Boy's choice . . . only because he didn't know the difference from Allah to Eskimo . . . and then Hop stopped and Morgan spoke curt . . . an order that cut, an order that hurt . . . and figures walked forward . . . just two. They knew what they were to do . . . and then of a sudden that awful cry . . . 'Oh, father, me darlin', good-by, good-by!'"

Here many more pages were missed. And then, draggily scrawled at the bottom of a page, words seemed to wee. . . .

"I can't write no more to-night . . . winds sighin' . . . I'm cryin' . . . poor Boy! poor Boy! . . . rollin' an' turnin' . . . temples a-burnin' . . . heartstrings a-yearnin' . . . comfort a-spurnin' . . . tossin' an' moanin' down below. . . ."

Here the scrawl leaped suddenly to life. . . .

"Go on, Father, do it now . . . in spite of yer presence my heart *does* ache. . . . Go on, Father, for Jesus' sake . . . I can't write . . . me fingers are thumbs. . . ."

Several lines were missed, and a hurried hand had written strongly. . . .

"Thank you, my Father, here he comes. . . ."

And then, as Looney Luke said afterwards, Boy came and sat beside him silently, the moon bathing his white face, with a curious light.

CHAPTER II

THE blood of every man is salty like the sea. But the Fury of these sea-drops of which man so largely is composed has weakened with time. He is glad to meet you whether he is or not; he is tactful to a point of secret dishonesty to himself; he agrees when he does not agree; he laughs when he is not amused; he bows over the white hand of the woman he does not respect.

With man in these days policy supplants passion, finesse replaces Fury. Man's Fury is abating.

The British Fury of Ypres, the French Fury of the Marne, the American Fury of Château Thierry prove the contrary, you say? No; they were not Fury, they were ordered and prescribed collective energies, expended violently, to be sure, but with method.

A war was won. A world (all said and some still say) was made safe for democracy.

But it was not through Fury of attack or counter. The war was won because orders were obeyed. In the chronicles are admitted startling, wonderful bits, isolated and individual instances of personal Fury.

As the Americans in the Argonne who disobeyed their G.H.Q. to obey their internal call; and their

triumph in that enterprise will go down into history. It was Fury.

The single French poilu skewering enemies upon a bayonet; the little British raiding parties, of three or four men at a time, and all the aviators, were splendidly furious.

But with the collar and tie again have come the smile and the lie.

Man's Fury is abating. He does not want to fight.

Man's muscles of resistance against women and wine, the bet on the race and the other furious pastimes of his fathers, are replaced by laws. Much exercise that might build social strength thus is checked. Man no longer needs to train for life; modern virile strength is principally of mind, useful in mathematics, politics, Wall Street or strategic love affairs. Muscle of the body and glory of the soul seem not to be considered necessary. Life has become a generous sealed handicap.

Your true sportsman of the past would turn away from the track of to-day—the track, or the ring, or the war, or the commerce, or the courtship of to-day—bored, annoyed and enraged.

The element of chance is in process of elimination. Another kind of race is on: the race to the handicapper's ear. It is a race of whispered wit, of sinister handshakes, of subtle traffickings in honor, of sacrifice of sentiment for gold or the advertising modernly named Glory—a race without Fury.

Sprinkled lightly about the world, however, are to be found places where the sun of impulse still shines upon plains, among mountains and especially upon the rolling decks of the real ships, man still breathes and lives in the mental and physical simplicity for which God made him, a creature of truth, love, hate . . . and Fury.

• • • • •

CHAPTER III

SEVERAL knots of sea had whirled the log before Boy spoke. Looney Luke watched him silently . . . furiously. Boy's eyes, no longer wet, glinted unusually; his figure that had drooped in sorrow now was straight; the slow, grief-numbed movement of limb had been replaced by quick, lithe grace; and the voice, no longer thick, rang out clearly.

"Luke, ye were fine! Thank ye, Luke!"

Boy's cool, firm hand gripped gratefully.

Luke's God answered prayers! . . . Boy had never looked so splendid, Luke was positive, and, as he arose, even the moon, admiring him humbly played calcium and lit him to advantage.

Then her hero and Luke's in the center of that tiny stage, the deck, stepped to the rail and looked off.

The night was beautiful, perfect. The pulse of Nature throbbed normally again. Boy and the sea and the perfect night, Luke thought. But quickly he knew better.

There was a new touch of marble; no, of steel, in Boy's splendor, as Luke now comprehended it . . . and he did comprehend.

Boy knew better even than Luke that large things had happened in him.

A new-lit glint was in those eyes that peered into

a future changed beyond the power of recognition. It was as if, Boy thought, it was another's life into which he had been shifted by magic.

Yesterday he had seen ahead Min and love no further off than Leith. To-day they were immeasurably distant. For impending periods of uncertain length he must do stealthy searching with a killing at its end!

Really there was no Min, any more; there was only another man, identity unknown as yet, who must be found and forthwith slain because a sailor's oath had been recorded before the Notary of Death.

Hate in Boy's eyes as the puzzled Luke looked at them? No! Passion? No? In them the calm and solid look of a man resolved. It seemed, Luke thought, to attract the sea, which, like a great lady at an ancient joust, lay back and waved her fan, and, smiling, blew a kiss to the fighter whom she loved.

Luke moved away and hid in the dark fo'c'sle.

Boy, by himself on deck, also was conscious of the sea's momentary lazy femininity. He, too, felt that she was watching him with careless interest, idly urging him along to the small tragedy which must be so great to him . . . urging him while, at the same time, another voice within his soul tormented him by whispering: "Min . . . Min . . . Min!"

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of every war is that as each fighter marches toward Glory for a Cause

the memory-ghost of some dear woman drags at him and drags at him and tries to drag him back to a forgetfulness of Duty, whispering in his ear some musical, loved name, as something whispered now to Boy, unceasingly (even while the other words were whirling in his soul): "Min . . . Min . . . Min!"

"Swear yer will marry nobody, do nothin', until —" the wash repeated carefully, succinctly, never changing a word by accident, trying never to leave a second in which Boy might lay aside the burden of his oath; but his soul's plea: "Min . . . Min . . . Min!" was never drowned.

The voice of the wash was steady, unemotional, persistent; and Boy knew that that wash—or something—would say that forever . . . forever . . . unless . . . No, no; not forever! *Only until a wife-thief gasped and paid!*

The wash would know when Boy had kept his oath; it always knew; and when it knew, then it would say:

"Well done . . . well done . . . well done!"

And it would say that forever, too; the wash was fair.

Even when Boy, later, was wrapped tight below and trying to sleep the stern sea ordered him: "You've got it to do! You've got it to do! You've got it to do!" and his dead father commanded: "Swear you will marry nobody . . . do nothin' . . . until—"; and through it all his own soul sobbed in agony: "Min . . . Min . . . Min!"

Would the North Sea whisper to him after he had trod the paths of tragedy: "Well done . . . well done," and when he had lost all through the fulfillment of his oath would it matter to him whether it did or not?

Now, when his soul whispered, "Min . . . Min . . . Min!" the sea along the freeboard, just above his head, chuckled.

Min would be in Leith waiting, by now.

Why had Dog Leyton said: "Do not marry until—"

Had he meant, Don't marry Min? He had known that Min was waiting at Leith for Boy. He had known that, right enough, because he had said he knew it. Why "don't marry?"

Death does not wait for waning Life to give its reasons.

"Swear yer will marry nobody until—," the wash repeated firmly.

And he had sworn the oath! Poor Min! Poor Boy!

For a sailor's oath is a sailor's oath and when a thing must be it must be. Yer don't blabber, yer don't talk, yer just do! That was that.

Following this reflection the wash was quieter, as if it felt that it might cease its whispering because it had served its purpose perfectly.

Min would have to be brave, too. And she would be. Min had been trained in Bravery's school. Her curious courage had come to her from the

breast of that ghost-mother who had fought against her tragic coming.

Yes, she'd be brave all right, Min would! She had her honor, too; there wasn't no one in the world with more honor than Min! And she'd bow, swing her all . . . her love . . . her hope . . . her dreams . . . yes, and her babies would be younger when she died in consequence, perhaps a year, perhaps two . . . and then perhaps no babies at all.

For him, either. No crinkling, wonderful pink things to toddle to Boy and call him "Daddy!"

But Min would support him in the keeping of a sailor's oath; she was of the sea; of the deep sea; and to one of the sea an oath to the dead. . . . Yes; Min would bow.

Boy did not know that Pinkie had said those things to Min on the train about sticking tight and all that.

How could he? He was at sea when that had happened and when Pinkie on land had pulled a lever at dawn that morning, to pass on to God another boy who had avenged. It all had happened at just about the time that Boy had watched something else pass out of sight forever.

So of course Boy had not heard those last words of Pinkie's to Min—"stick tight!" At that moment he had been kneeling . . . swearing before his dying father.

But he knew that if she did stick tight it would

be a grim and not a joyous thing as they had thought. But he believed she'd stick.

He did not know that or anything; she did not know; nobody knew. Who knows anything, anyway?

Perhaps the sea does . . . and always has . . . and did. At any rate now she whispered . . . "Min! . . . Min!" . . . and chuckled.

PART V

"I know now what the witches said
To Macbeth on the heath,
And why some people should be dead;
I learned a lot in Leith."
—LOONEY LUKE'S POEMS

CHAPTER I

THE Thistle Hotel, Waterfront, Leith, Scotland, very old and very small, from the outside looked dirty and sulky in the drizzling rain at seven o'clock of the morning following the arrival of a certain lady guest from London.

But inside could be heard the cheery crackling of a fire new lit in the saloon bar, the rattle of cups and saucers and spoons, the general music of breakfast, all harmonizing nicely with the distant voice of the lady singing upstairs.

It smelt of stale beer and smoke; but still it was warm and homey inside, even when the voice of the lady upstairs fell into silence after a bang of a distant door.

In the saloon bar, which was a room and not actually a bar, Mrs. Ross, the proprietress, busied herself with table cloth, spoons and marmalade-pot. She was not fat, as she should have been, this Mrs. Ross, and she did not wear diamonds in the morning as the proprietress of an hotel should have done. Instead, she was gaunt, and gray, and dressed in black.

She placed on the table between a knife and fork a piece of paper with something written upon it. She was pleased. It had been four years since the word "Hotel," painted large outside, had been jus-

tified by The Thistle. Folk only came there to drink and fight, in spite of cards hung prominently, signed "Mrs. Angus Ross, proprietress," to state the fact that one might also sleep for moderate prices in the venerable building.

But now it was a hotel in truth again. Did it not possess a lady house-guest from London? The gallant Angus Ross, of the Black Watch, killed at Arras for his King, the Angus whose picture in full uniform hung over the fire, seemed to smile whimsically at his wife's pleasure. At any rate the fire-glow played flickeringly round and about his firm mouth.

The lady house-guest was a "wee, sparre bairn," and yet ate a large amount of everything. Londoners were funny. They ate and yet they were thin. They sang when they were sad (not that the lady guest was sad; oh, no!) but she sang all the time and one cannot be that happy. They have money which they take care every one shall see, and yet bargain over a ha'penny cookie. Strange creatures, truly, Londoners!

But people from other countries were different, naturally. There was only one Scotland in the world!

This lady guest, this winsome wee lassie, certainly was too happy for Leith. What was the use of being happy? It only made your sadness sadder when it came, as it was sure to. But then, Londoners didn't know much anyway. How could they? They're not Scotch!

"Good morning, Mrs. Ross!" a piping voice said seriously. "It ain't arf a mornin', ain't it . . . fer the ducks!" The voice laughed heartily at its own joke and Miss Brent, the lady house-guest from London, went to the fire and warmed her clean, red hands.

"It's rainin' oot, lassie, ye were sayin'?"

"Yes; blimey, what a day fer the ole man ter come 'ome ter 'is ole woman!" This thought seemed to make Min very happy.

"An' what auld folk werre ye referrin' to, lassie?"

"Eh?" Min looked blank. The old lady talked like somebody falling downstairs. What was she driving at?

And the very Scotch Mrs. Ross left the room. Why wait to hear the answer? It didn't matter.

The odor of bacon kissed Min's nose, and the sizzling song of frying eggs wafted in from the kitchen, filling the entr'acte until Mrs. Ross returned, with a large teapot.

"I will be havin' me oon breakfast her-re wi' ye, if ye've no obje-e-ction, Miss Br-rent!"

Blimey! This was the goods, all right! If Min had no objection! She'd lain in bed until hunger bade her rise, and dressing with care, singing, she'd wondered several times if it was all a dream. She has also touched wood.

But here she was, smelling bacon, hearing eggs, seeing tea, warmed by a fire, nothing to do but eat a lot, sit by that fire, talk a lot, dream a lot and

wait for Boy—her Boy—to come and splice her.

She had some brass in her bag, too; she could buy something if she wanted to; a beautiful hat if she'd a mind to walk a bit; a brolley to push up if it was still raining. This week's Heartsease novel was lying, casual-like, on the bed upstairs; there was a bathroom, with a bath in that you could sit down in, for tuppence a go!

And Min had had her two-pennorth of that all right, last night. Two hours for tuppence and she'd nearly fallen asleep, there in the water. She'd sat down slow, so that the warm wet came up her body creepy like. She'd only been in a bath that you could sit in once before. But you've got to have it rough to get it really smooth afterwards. And this was smooth all right. Here was the lady what owned the place saying with her own mouth to Min:

"If you've no objection."

If Min had no objection! Ha, ha! that was a funny one!

Min didn't answer. You could have knocked her over with a feather.

Mrs. Ross hadn't waited for her to answer, so Min sat down in the place, the one opposite from the fire, and then Mrs. Ross entered with breakfast.

What a breakfast! Bacon, eggs, scones, marmalade, tea and as much as you could get down of it!

Min ate in silence and Mrs. Ross ate one muffin with some butter on it, and was on her second cup

of tea when somebody tapped with a penny on the public bar, which was just through the door from the saloon. Mrs. Ross rose and said, "Excuse me," to Min, who couldn't think quickly enough of the right answer, so that Mrs. Ross, taking things for granted, had left before Min said:

"Don't mensh, ma'am!"

Then she heard a woman's voice in the next bar say: "Two of rum, cold."

Min shuddered. That was Ma Brent's ey-opener in the morning. Only not two of rum, cold; oh, no, my dear—six of rum, cold, if you please, was far more like it.

She heard Mrs. Ross say:

"It's very early, Tillie, won't you take a cup of tea instead? Have it on the house to warm your stomach?"

She was a good old sport, this 'ere Mrs. Ross was.

"Tea!" the thick voice of the other woman rang out, scornfully. "Tea!"

Then the voice muffled down and Min heard the clink of a bottle and glass and the tinkle of the bell in the cash register.

Min was still eating when Mrs. Ross returned.

"Another egg, lassie?"

Min, with her mouth full, nodded. She felt warm, her ear was burning, the left one; Boy was talking of her.

Of course he was! What else would he talk about? She caught sight of a piece of paper in front of her, as she lifted her plate for the egg.

She picked it up with her other hand. It read like this:

| | |
|---|-------|
| One Day's Board and Room..... | 3/6 |
| One Bath, Special..... | 6 |
| Heel of Shoe Repaired, paid for at bar... | 1/- |
| | <hr/> |
| | 5/- |

Accounts rendered daily.

What was the extra fourpence for on the bath?

Oh, well! The lady guest from London smiled tolerantly. She smiled at the serious face of Mrs. Ross, and said lightly:

"You ain't arf Scotch, all right, are yer?"

But what did fourpence matter? Pshaw! She'd got a lot more fourpences left.

She pushed away her plate and leaned back with a contented sigh. Her tummy pushed against her waist belt. The clock struck eight. The penny tapped again on the bar, and again Mrs. Ross left; this time she did not say "Excuse me."

Heigh ho! What strange things manners are! Sometimes you do, and then sometimes you don't. Min didn't care much. Heigh ho! She was up in society; yes, she was that right enough; but when you're full to the brim, contented, you don't worry much about what any one does or says.

She sighed again. She felt so well. She could hear the bottle and glass again in the public bar, and then some more people talking. Men, sailors by the sound of them. A boat was in. Then, suddenly the thought! *The Lady Spray* perhaps!

Peeping through the door she saw four strange sailors and one old totter, the old lady whom Mrs. Ross had called Tillie; crazy old thing she looked, with her back towards her.

The sailors were drunk already and were chipping Tillie, who grinned and said something which Min understood well enough, but which made her shudder, all the same; the kind of talking that didn't go well on top of a beautiful breakfast and a burning ear from the Boy what was coming home to-day.

She turned away, and singing passed upstairs.

And her voice was the voice of the lady who was singing upstairs earlier in the morning.

Across the bed in her room lay her trousseau—a nightgown, pink, with ribbons in it, and two other garments that you don't talk of, let alone write about, but very pretty all the same.

These latter had to be threaded with ribbon. So sticking some dainty pink ribbon to the eye of a darning needle, with a firm hand, Minnie started to work, singing:

“Father got the sack from the water-works,
Through smoking his little, cherry briar;
The foreman said he had done wrong,
'Cause he might 'ave set the water-works on fire.”

Minnie laughed. Bloomin' funny song that was! Ha, ha! She always laughed when she sang it, she did. Her and Boy had heard it together, down at the Poplar Hippodrome. A beautiful lady sang

it, with feathers and ribbons, like . . . yes, just like Min was now.

“’E might ’ave set the water-works on fire!”

Ha, ha! Bloomin’ funny! She laughed again. She always did when she sang it. When she finished laughing she sighed. Gawd! She was the happy one, all right.

CHAPTER II

IT was three o'clock. The rain had not abated, but *The Lady Spray* really was in. Morgan and Mr. Hop had gone to the company's office and only a few of the crew were off. There was little gossip about Morgan. He was due to be Master all right.

Clancey caught up with Boy walking down the waterfront toward The Thistle.

"What's up, Boy? You look as though you'd broke a winder."

Boy did not answer. They were passing The Robin Hood, a tiny pub where the beer was good, and Clancey said: "Come in an' 'ave one, Mr. L."

Boy stopped. He did not drink, but he was afraid to go on to The Thistle alone. No, not afraid, but . . .

He allowed Clancey to take his arm and pull him into The Robin Hood's stuffy bar.

Clancey said, "Hello!" all round and grinned at the tall, blonde barmaid.

"'Ello, Mildred ol' girl! I'm travelin' in society. I got Mr. Leyton, second mate, 'long with me."

Mildred extended across the bar a large white hand with rings on it and Boy, after looking at it for a moment, took hold of it and shook it up and down about twice.

"What's yer pleasure, Mr. Leyton? Delighted, I'm sure."

"Ginger beer, please."

"Stone's? Or White's? Which d'yer prefer, Mr. Leyton?"

"Oh, I dunno; just ginger beer'll do."

Clancey lit a Woodbine.

"We ain't pertickler, sweetheart. Make mine a bitter in a tankard, will yer?"

Clancey felt pretty good. Why shouldn't he? He'd like to know why not. He'd had a couple and there wasn't a blinking cloud on his horizon, not as he could see.

Never had been. He just went on, and drank a bit, and swore all the time, shaved occasionally, and loved the girls, old or young, according to the degrees of his intoxication. Old 'uns would put up with most anything. Young 'uns—well, you have to be alive; you can be drunk, but you got to be merry drunk. The young 'uns wouldn't hold you up from falling down, unless it was one who loved you, and then she'd hold on forever; and who in the name of Satan wanted any one in love with 'im hanging on all the time? And then who in the name of Satan would be falling in love with Clancey?

So there it was, and there was Clancey, talking quietly to Mildred the bar-maid, and glancing again and again furtively round at Boy who had stepped over to gaze absently at some pictures on the walls of ships at sea.

"We dropped 'is ole man over, a day ago. He's a bit down, the boy is. Shove a good slog of gin in that ginger beer; 'e won't know no different."

Mildred had already noted Boy's eyes. She liked dark eyes. She tried to darken her own.

"But if the young man don't drink, Mr. Clancey!" she remonstrated.

Clancey spoke quickly: "G'wan, Mil, it'll do 'im good. He's in bad weather, an' it'll buck 'im up a bit. G'wan. Don't say nothin'. 'Ere's a shillin' for it."

Boy came back to the bar. His throat was dry and the ginger-beer looked wet. He drained his glass. He was dry, all right.

"Give us a Woodbine, Clancey, an' fill 'em up again, Miss, please."

"The same, Mr. Leyton?"

"Yes, I reckon so. What about it, Clancey?"

"Oh, the same, my darlin' angel"; and Clancey leaned across and touched Mildred's red cheek meaningly. And then turning to Boy he spoke:

"You're gettin' a reg'lar land lad, smokin' an' everythin', now the old 'un's gone."

Boy turned. "Oh, it gives yer somethin' ter do. A bloke looks stronger with a fag or a pipe in 'is mouth."

Clancey thought for a moment. He seldom thought, but he often looked as if he might be thinking. He spoke conversationally, throatily, in the voice he had used when he had said: "Thank

you all, very kindly, I'm sure," once, at the Buf-falos' Lodge, in Limehouse. It was his best voice.

"Oh, I don't know, Mr. L.; now ter my way of thinkin' a cigar carried proper in yer mouth tops yer off right like." He turned to the bar-maid. "Give us a couple of tup'ny stinkers, Mil."

The drinks and cigars arrived together.

Boy's ginger beer tasted a little bitterer even than before. Clancey's other shilling slipped nimbly under the cigar-box, indicating to the very fly Mildred that she must charge Boy only for one bitter and one ginger ale, and not for the gin.

Then some one came and spoke to Clancey, a girl with a certain kind of face, under a certain kind of tam-o'-shanter drawn sharply over one eye, and high black boots, dirty and with some buttons off. Clancey put his arm around her thin waist, and drew her forward to Boy.

"'Ere y'are, Mr. L. 'Ere's a picture for yer. Love yer Clan, do yer? You're a bunny lassie, all right. 'Ave a spot with Clan, will yer?"

The girl of course assented and Clancey commenced whispering to her. She struggled free and giggled. He took a step to her and drew her away from Boy, still whispering, with a look in his eye that some men have sometimes.

Boy leaned against the bar. He was throbbing. He did not drink; he never had; but now he had and didn't know it. He only knew that he had a burning desire to think, and his thoughts were con-

fusedly tumbling and pushing each other over and around in his brain.

What was the first step? What?

He had not lighted his cigar; he would save it. He felt different, stronger, less afraid to go to The Thistle,—The Thistle where Min was waiting.

He took mental reckoning and found where he was now, but . . . still, he didn't quite know where he was, although he had known that just that very instant when he had taken his reckoning.

What would he say first to Min? No; he wouldn't think of that part first. He couldn't think of those things. You can't think about them. He'd think of that when the time came. But it didn't hurt to think of the job he was to do, to "find the one that took her."

Gawd! The bloke what took his mother! The one that caused everything!

His father would have lived another twenty years if that thing hadn't happened and would have been a lot different, probably; and Boy would have had a mother to kiss and say "Mother" to.

Another ginger beer appeared at his elbow. Clancey was treating again, and Boy was thirsty. He drank half of it.

"I gave 'im a good one that time," Mildred whispered to Clancey. "He looks so sad, poor laddie!"

The girl in the tam-o'-shanter looked across at Boy who was looking at nothing.

"Now, now, flirty, flirty!"

Clancey engaged her attention again; but from the corner of her eye she watched, attracted by Boy, who was perfectly still, looking at nothing.

A mother to kiss and say "Mother" to. Yes, Boy would have loved that.

CHAPTER III

IN the dim days to come when school children will hear about kings and titles that existed through these ancient times when the flood and the great war, Nero and Edison, lie snugly together, page on page in future history books, God, the King of Kings, will still be bidding woman kneel and, touching her upon the shoulder, will be bidding her Rise . . . Mother!

Thus then as now the greatest title of all time (in the eyes of God Almighty and good men) will still be spoken . . . Mother!

Men will leave her at home, they'll kiss her, they'll forget her, they'll love her, they'll abuse her, they'll worship her; perhaps, in those days, even if she be one who, like Minnie's mother, fails to register before God or the Law, the intention of becoming Mother and get a license, they will lift her into a great Parliament of all Parliaments, an uppermost of all governing chambers, the House of Mothers!

Perhaps they will, perhaps they won't. But she'll be Mother all the same—a good mother or a bad mother.

The word Mother bridges the entire expanse between the elements of the best good and the worst bad. Your good Mother is the nearest thing on

earth to God; your bad Mother is the nearest thing on earth to Hell and its governing power.

Oh, child, always her baby! Our Mother! yours and mine! Look into her eyes, or . . .

If she is with God, close your eyes and ask Him to place her again in your memory as she was. He'll lend her; of course he will. She is still yours and always will be yours, waiting for you, her arms outstretched . . . those sweet limbs that perhaps you yourself crossed upon her still, cool breast. But when you find them waiting you will know that all the time they have been warm and strong (there in Eternity) for you.

If she still lives and you lately have not seen her, go to her and look into her eyes and find there that which you have longed for while you have been out in the world. Hold her hand very gently, pause a moment, then say these words:

"I love you, my Mother!"

She will turn and you will find that peace will come and fears will pass. You will live again.

Is she waiting now to hear the voice of one of us exclaim: "I love you, my Mother"? or to open a telegram: "I love you, my Mother"? Or to hear God say: "Your son or your daughter have been saying, down on earth, and deeply thinking, 'I love you, my Mother!'"

How can her parting diminish her use, her love! She is your birthright; she is your Mother still, always your Mother.

Her breath will brush your cheek and then that

cheek will rest upon her hair. She will tuck the bedclothes around your back, if the night is cold, and open wide the window upon summer nights—however many summers old you are—and when you tell her what you've done, and what you're going to do and what you've heard folks say of you, pride will light her eyes. She will not speak at once, perhaps because she cannot, but always she will understand and never will she think you boast. And if pain racks you or you sorrow, if you are in agony of mind or soul, oh, she will comfort you.

Then you want to doze to the music of her sweet "Good Night, and God bless you, my darling!" And she will tiptoe away—and turn and look back at you from the door.

Mother of God, Mother of you and Mother of me, Mother of all men . . . gray, pink and white, gentle, soft and beautiful! Her hands are warm, however cold they are; to steal to her and kiss her is to tiptoe up to God and kiss Him.

Mother, my own Mother . . . how I love you!

CHAPTER IV

A MOTHER to kiss and say "Mother" to . . . yes; Boy would have loved that!

He drained the rest of his ginger beer and stood up. He must find his mother first. She was in Leith; he knew that; but why hadn't his father told him where in Leith? There were so many things he should have asked, but it was too late now . . . too late!

In his pocket, a hundred and forty pounds, his father's fortune . . . his; but his father's first for his task—wherever that man was he must find him and then . . . kill!

Kill? Did his father mean kill? That would mean escape after; escape into silence; or perhaps arrest and death for himself and a broken heart for Min. Poor Min—her heart was going to break, anyway! Why . . . why?

Had his father thought that out? Was that why he put the marriage thing in the oath . . . out of consideration for Min? He'd called her dirty, though.

Boy's mouth tightened. The gin surged and bittered his mood.

Kill? What for? Two deaths didn't make a life. Luke had whispered that. But Luke hadn't lost a mother and a father through one man. And Luke hadn't sworn . . .

If he broke his oath, he'd never be a man again. And not even that would be fair to Min, because she wouldn't marry a man if he broke his oath. For then it wouldn't be a man she'd be marrying; no, it'd be a scared, hunted lout, a funk, a dirty funk who had gone back on his sailor's oath, who'd lied to the dead (and the dead were waiting to welcome yer or damn yer, Looney Luke said) and he wanted to kiss his father again when he met him, like the kiss he'd had before. . . . No; there wasn't any way of being fair to Min, just now!

The die was cast. Min, love, hope, everything must go. He must kill this man!

Shoot him? No. His father had said, "Get his throat!"

It must be a man-fight. God, what a bloody fight it was going to be! If this man was any size, it would be a fight all right! Boy's muscles tautened, his eyes blazed, he stood up. But he must find this mother first.

Mother! What would she look like? What would he do? What would she say? What would it matter? He'd have to leave her right away . . . to go and kill that man.

A good idea: He wouldn't let her know who he was. Why grieve a mother you've just found? He'd just find her and help her vanish to do his bit of tragedy. Min . . . she'd . . . well, something would take care of that. Maybe his mother and Min . . .

He moved toward the door,

Clancey called after him: "Wait a minute!"

"Ask 'im if 'e wants a nice Scotch girl," piped the girl in the tam-o'-shanter.

Clancey laughed. "I reckon that's just what 'e does want. We may be back. A few more ginger-beers . . . eh? . . . he will, anyway. S'long, Mil; s'long all."

The door slammed.

Mil turned to the lassie with the certain kind of face, under a certain kind of tam-o'-shanter.

"Get out o' 'ere, you! You ain't accompanied. You know the rules of the 'ouse!"

Without a word the girl in the tam-o'-shanter slunk through the door.

"The idea of a thing like 'er, lookin' at that boy!" Mildred mumbled as she polished the glasses, and mused: "He'd nice eyes, with a lot of dark spots in 'em." Mil, like Min, read the Heartease library. "Yes, he was a nice boy—fresh and young. A few more ginger beers like that an'—"

Mil was over thirty, but she broke a glass in her hand because she polished it so furiously.

CHAPTER V

THE LADY SPRAY was in; Red, off of her, had been in the public bar of The Thistle and had a couple. There Min had questioned him. Yes; he'd seen Boy coming off same time as he did. Boy had most likely gone down to the office, or, still more probably, had gone off to buy something; a present maybe.

Red mentioned nothing of Dog Leyton's death, perhaps because he was drunk; and then again Red was the kind that wouldn't mention it anyway.

Min had had a wonderful day; a day kissed every moment with tingling, wonderful anticipation. She'd had another bath, and shampooed her hair with some perfumed powder from the chemist.

She'd looked at her little body in the glass in the bathroom. She was filling out already, and that reminded her; she tried on the new nightdress.

It was a bit Frenchy and low, was it too low? She turned around before the little mirror. No, she didn't think so.

And then those roses, three of them that she had sent the cellar-man out for. They'd cost one-and-six, a tanner each, but they were worth it all right. Pink, they were, and getting lighter at the edges; and the smell—ooh!

Min had never before owned a rose; she'd seen them at the hospital, though, and now she gazed

spellbound into the flowers, and she didn't know why, but the color was so soft, and they were so clean, with specks of water on (dew, maybe) that they made her feel as if she was in a church. She trembled and put them in a glass, the one that she'd got from the bathroom and had cleaned her teeth in.

Oh, there was that, too. She had got a brush and some pink paste from the chemist; the paste tasted nice and she wanted to eat it; and after she'd cleaned them, Min's teeth looked white, except the one which was a little bit gone at the side.

She'd been to the Dental Hospital once with Mrs. Fels' eldest daughter, but some one had screamed in the next room and she had run out, and it hurt her gums to clean her teeth, so that she'd never bothered.

But to-day everything had got to look white and pink, like the bed and her nightdress.

She'd got into bed and held up the mirror to see how she looked in bed, and turning on her side she'd imagined Boy, her husband, lying there, sleeping; and leaning over she pretended that she kissed his forehead and he smiled in his sleep.

Dressed, she had donned those things that she'd put ribbon into. They felt warm and soft next to her skin.

She'd scrubbed her hands and touched her face with some flour from the kitchen. Now then, would she leave the roses in the glass beside the bed and her nightdress . . . or . . .

She went to the door and opened it, pretending she was Boy. What would he see, when they came up together? Pink and white! Pink and white! Well, she'd go both ways; she'd wear them and then when they came up . . . after the marriage, when she started to . . . undress, she'd slip them again into the glass next the bed, all pink and white, as she'd be in a minute . . . then!

Everything was coming that way; there was old Pinkie . . . she shuddered. A shadow seemed to cross the room and his low voice vibrate—she could almost hear him again; and he was right, all right, that Pinkie!

“You're on the threshold of Life's sweetest journey; stick tight . . . stick tight!”

Then some one knocked at the door, and a voice outside told her that some one had asked for her downstairs.

It was Boy—Boy at last.

She trembled violently. At last!

She sat down on the bed for a moment to steady herself. She took a deep breath, and rose and crossed, and put on the hat with the feathers on.

CHAPTER VI

“**W**HAT a game! We pull out to-night for London,” said Captain Morgan as he left the office with Mr. Hop at his side.

Morgan waited while Mr. Hop asked some one for a match to light his pipe. Captain Morgan did not smoke, and he fidgeted restlessly upon the corner until Mr. Hop, tucking his books carefully under his arm and exuding clouds of smoke, came forward beaming.

“Congratulations, Captain.”

They stood on the corner, chatting, one very tall and one very short. Morgan spat.

“Boy’s first, you’re second mate now—”

“Yes, Captain, I gathered that from Mr. Rogers while I was waiting. I expect you spoke a good word for me, sir?”

“I did. And I reckon it won’t be long before ye’re first mate. I’ll buck Clancey up then. I’ve give him your berth for now.”

“Things are changin’ quickly.” Mr. Hop looked up.

“They ain’t changin’ as they’re goin’ to change.” Mr. Morgan looked down. “If that brat ain’t already jumped, he soon will when I get after him.”

Morgan’s eyes narrowed while Mr. Hop stood and puffed complacently at his pipe.

Then Morgan spoke again: "The Company's keen on the boy, so I'll have to take 'im back to London with us, but after that it will be time enough. Savvy?"

"I think I understand you, Captain." Mr. Hop looked up. It commenced to rain again. "Have a drink, Captain?"

Morgan did not answer; but he walked on. Mr. Hop's short legs stretched after him.

"Robin Hood, Captain?"

Morgan looked down. "The Robin Hood's not a master's house; you ought to know that."

"Oh, beg pardon, Captain. The Thistle then? Eh, what?"

Captain Morgan walked on; he did not answer.

The rain pattered down about them, but men like that do not notice rain.

They passed under a sign, "MacFarlane Rescue Home." Morgan glanced up—a tragic house, wet, black, and dismal.

Morgan walked on. Men like that don't notice . . .

CHAPTER VII

BOY, twiddling his father's watch chain, stood before the fire in the saloon bar of The Thistle and waited.

Two other occupants of the saloon talked quietly and then stopped to laugh at something one of them had said. They looked up as Mrs. Ross came and spoke to them, and then they rose and left, glancing at Boy curiously.

"I thought you'd like to be alone, Meester Leyton."

Boy said, "Thank you," mechanically.

"Would ye care forr a bit of quiet supperr after the weddin', Mr. Leyton?"

Boy answered the one word, "No," mechanically.

To-day had been a singularly happy one for the sad lady in black. The smoky air had been charged with vital romance. Min had talked on and on of love and of Boy and she had actually left her lunch untouched, which, after all, was so much saving for the house, and Mrs. Ross was Scotch, even if sometimes sentimental.

"Saving room for tea with Boy," Min had explained. Then she had discoursed of things that made Mrs. Ross disinclined to eat; and when Min had skipped off for her bath, Mrs. Ross had spoken

quietly to brave Angus there, over the fireplace, of the days when . . .

Yes, Mrs. Ross had laughed and wept (and profited) that day, and here was the braw laddie that she had almost learned to love herself.

How well she remembered when his father, Dog Leyton, had brought him into The Thistle as a tiny toddling boy, and Angus and she had given him a scone with jam on it, and then he'd dozed and his little wistful eyes had cried in the smoke, and at closing time, he had been asleep and Dog Leyton, drunk, had thrown this same Boy across his shoulder and staggered with him back to *The Lady Spray* and the laughing sea.

She had not seen Boy for some years, and she thought him changed. She had been a wee bit hurt at his failure to recall the scones and the marmalade, when he came in.

He had been curt, almost rude. He had been in London, perhaps, and that had spoiled him.

Ah, but the little lass upstairs would soon change him! She had a real soul, that lassie had; she was a wee bairn wi' a dash o' God in her.

And at that moment the bairn with a dash o' God in her entered with feathers waving in her hat.

"Boy-ee!" She stood framed in the doorway, pink and white, with roses at her waist.

Boy turned.

"I didn't come to meet ye, Boy. I feared for me feathers in the rain."

She stood aside for Mrs. Ross to pass, smiling, and the door shut upon them. They were alone in the way she had looked forward to.

She advanced to him slowly.

He watched her, his face calm, unmoved.

Ah, he was actin' a bit! Playin'; kiddin' at bein' serious, bless him! Here stood her Boy, her man!

She held up her face to be kissed. He did not move. He just looked steadily down at her. Some new chills were running through her—such cold chills. But of course that was nonsense.

“What’s up, Boy? To look at yer, it looks as though we was spliced already.”

She waited, smiling. He was going to speak. She knew he was, because his throat jumped, and his Adam’s apple moved up and down; but it kept moving up and down. He could not speak.

Ah, it was love; that’s what it was! That was it. He was scared, same as she was, upstairs, when they told her he had come.

Bless him! Fancy a man gettin’ the jumps! But that was love, that was. Love was bigger even than a man; she’d read that in a book somewhere.

So to put him at his ease, she pirouetted happily around and preened.

“Pipe me tit fer tat. It’s chick enough to vamp yer growsey old dad.”

“Father’s dead!”

The words came slowly, ponderously like a parson’s.

“’Ooray!”

Boy winced and did not move; and then in a moment she was at his side, looking up, quick with sympathy now that she knew he needed it, even if she didn't understand how he could.

"Sorry, Boy. Sorry, matey. Straight, I'm sorry. I didn't mean 'ooray!' I meant 'when?' What's up? Don't look like that!"

Boy was silent for a moment, and slowly he took her hands; warm, eager little hands, trembling with excitement.

"Min, I can't marry ye. . . . Not now, Min."

A sunlit, fragrant garden became suddenly black, vague and awful. Chilling gusts of spiteful wind ruthlessly beheaded tall azaleas. Pats of icy rain cut into pansy-faces and cruel gravel ripped foliage that a moment before had smiled. A clap of thunder; a flash; monuments tumbled foolishly, and drenched waste, shivering, whirled in tragic helplessness within the storm.

"Min, I can't marry ye . . . not now, Min."

She stood before him, white and trembling.

She did not speak. How could she? Something was banging in her ears.

His mouth was moving again, but she could not hear what he was saying. How could she? And then her cry:

"Wait!"

Her hands clapped over his mouth and the roses, crushed against him, tore and fell, foolishly, brokenly, out and under the table, where petals fought by the draft from under the floor fled hur-

riedly to distant, dusty corners, like little pink, aristocratic girls scurrying from the clank of a French guillotine.

"Wait!" . . . Boy! . . . Christ, wait! . . . Wait; I can't 'ear what ye're sayin'! . . . I can't 'ear! . . . I . . ."

"Min . . . now be steady. 'Ere, sit down 'ere."

She was curiously, stiffly limp, as he sat her down in the deep horsehair chair. He stood for a moment, looking down into her little pinched face, now dull yellow. He ground his teeth and sweat stood out upon his forehead.

He was looking at Min, wasn't he? His Min! And look at her! She wasn't moving; she was looking funny; she was looking up at him like . . .

No, no, no; it could not be! It could not be! He must seize her in his arms and tell her he was kiddin' her. She'd be cross at the joke, but she'd smile again, after. It would always be with her, that fright; but look! she's . . . a flitting smile twitched the corners of her mouth as pink merged with the blue.

"Boy! Boy darlin'. Ye ain't arf unkind to play [with me like that!"]

Oh, how easy now to say, "Forgive me, Min; just [a bloomin' joke.]"

He knelt down suddenly and looked into her [little face that was glowing again. Neither spoke and her hand reached forward and touched his father's heavy gold chain.]

"Ye ain't arf the smart lad . . . are ye, darlin'?" And she fingered the chain, delicately, tenderly.

It was not a moment for words. Her sails were up, waiting for a wind to sweep her home into his arms; her trust was in the sailors' God . . . truth . . . his love.

Boy glanced down at the golden chain in her little fingers. How lightly she touched the heavy old seal and all the significance of that touch came upon him in an instant.

He was veering his course!

A woman's hand was upon his wheel, turning him toward shoals and pleasant island shores where were birds of happiness, soft ease and peace; but the sailor must keep his course ahead, ahead! He could hear the wash now—the eternal wash.

"Swear you'll marry no one . . . do nothin' until . . ."

And Min, the woman, sat still, very still, calmly watching him. The woman now, patient, waiting.

He should speak, when he was ready; he would speak; and thus an awful quiet fell.

Boy quivered, as the toughest seamen do when the tide is rising and loved ones stand silent, waiting—waiting for good-by!

There was Min, sitting there, patiently, helpless, loving, trusting him, and he must . . . he must . . .

His head fell forward, suddenly, and a stifled sob broke from him as his face buried itself in her lap. His tears dampened her wedding dress.

But she was silent still. What was there to say?

At such times such women do not speak; such women do not ask; they wait, still, silent, patient . . . like God.

A burst of raucous laughter came hurtling in from the public bar next door, after Clancey's voice had rung out in the next room with: "'Ave you 'eard of the lady from Gloucester?" and then had recited something.

That laughter broke the silent spell with Boy and Min, some way.

Boy rose suddenly to his feet and turned away from her, toward the fire.

She rose firmly and came and stood behind him.

Ah-ha! Ah-ha! she had smelt the gin. Min's nose knew gin. Ha, ha! Bless him, he'd been celebratin' his weddin'! O-h, that was it! Just stewed a little, and, nice boy as he was, he was a bit ashamed over it, and took it tragic serious.

Gawd, as if she wouldn't look over that! Silly Boy! What kind of a man would he be if he didn't have a spot on his weddin' day? Why, strike her pink, to come down to it now, she'd have a swig of gin herself! It would make her sick, but he'd only got to ask her and then she'd be quits with him. Silly Boy!

And gin does make people sad, Mrs. Fels had said so; and Ma Brent cried something pitiful during one of her gin-crawls.

Minnie spoke: "Why didn't ye have Scotch or a drop o' claret, Boy? Gin saddens ye."

So Min helped her man.

In a moment Boy returned to Boy and the wheel swung around, ahead upon its course. He swung with it.

"Gin? What d'yer mean?"

"Oh, Boy, darlin', I don't care. I love ye. It's yer weddin' day, ain't it?"

"No, it ain't!"

"Ah-h-h!"

He caught her arm. "What do you mean, 'gin'?"

"Ooh, darlin'; ye're 'urtin'. No matter; Min knows. Min understands ye."

"What do ye know?"

"I know!" She smiled. Oh, what a bloomin' sweet baby he was! She could handle him, all right.

But then, if he was wishful that she shouldn't know, then she didn't know, did she?

He spoke again, gruffly: "What do ye know?"

"Nothin', darlin'."

"Ye said ye did know somethin'." The grip tightened on her wrist, painfully.

"Ooh, Boy, ye're 'urtin', darlin'!"

For a moment he regarded her in silence and then released her wrist. Mischievous sparks danced happily in her eyes.

"Ye ain't used to it, darlin'; but ye gave me a fright; you did, straight! How do ye like me 'air, Boy?"

Taking off her hat, she laid it upon the table.

"Ye ain't arf a card, Boy. When ye said 'I can't marry yer', oh, lummy; me stomach went ooh!"

"It's too bad about yer dad. When I saw Red to-day he didn't say nothin' about it. What'd he die of, Boy? Booze was it?"

"No! Ye got booze on the brain, ye 'ave."

"No, I ain't, Boy. I was just askin' a question like."

"Well, it wasn't booze, see. And I meant what I said, see. I can't marry ye. Not now. 'Cause—'cause—I swore to 'im I wouldn't, before he died, see."

A quarter of one minute's silence; then:

"Oh, ye did!"

The voice that said, "Oh, ye did!" was a new kind of voice for Min to use with Boy; it was the still voice of Nurse Cavell, when she said, "I have nothing to say!" It was the voice of martyred woman through ages. "Oh, ye did!" And Min stood there, calm and still, and listened, and though his voice sounded miles away, she heard every word he said.

Neither heard the voice of Morgan in the public bar, gruffly telling Mrs. Ross that she had no right to close the saloon bar when a ship's captain wanted a quiet drink.

It would be all cleared in a few minutes, Mrs. Ross' voice assured him, and then they might all be invited to a wedding drink.

And when Clancey told him who it was there in the saloon bar, Morgan laughed and decided to wait, just to get a peep at the lovebirds for him-

self. Good thing, too. They were getting out to-night sharp at tide, and if the first mate wasn't aboard, he'd jumped ship, that was all. And bloody good riddance!

He repeated this thought to Mr. Hop, who puffed a little. His rise had come and now it was going to be a good rise, and here's to it; and he clinked glasses with his captain.

As Captain and first mate, they'd have some smooth trips together, these two, they would. Mr. Hop knew Captain Morgan as Mr. Hop knew everything; and Captain Morgan did not know Mr. Hop, which made Mr. Hop easy to get around with.

Morgan felt tall and strong and calm. "Captain Morgan of *The Lady Spray*," eh? Good enough!

There was a little woman he knew of in London, near Aldgate Street she lived, who had said once, not so long ago, "I love captains, and wait until the time comes," and all that sort of stuff that women say when they're urging for time and get scared of the jump; when they're hooked and don't feel like being landed, yet. He'd have a new suit on when he saw her again, he would, a captain's uniform.

Clancey spoke at his elbow: "'Ow about one on me, Skipper? Fer luck."

"Why not?" Morgan nodded, condescendingly. Clancey had the crew pretty straight. "Why not?"

Looney Luke came in. The bar set up a roar. Good old Spooky! Good old Luke!

Luke smiled shyly as he looked around and Clancey shouted: "A glass of pigeon's milk fer Looney Luke!"

A sudden clap of laughter.

It was because of that that no one in that bar heard the scream next door, the scream of Min when Boy had said:

"I've got to kill 'im first, Min, and then I'll come to ye and we'll go off together and hide. It'll be rough on ye, 'cause there'll be a kind o' shadow over us. I shan't care fer meself, but it'll be hard fer you if they should come an' take me away an' 'ang me."

Of course Min had screamed.

Hang . . . Boy!

Up to the time of those words she had been calm; she had listened patiently to his voice.

Every word had cut her, lashed her, torn her; but she had stood calmly as women will while he had told her everything. She had not winced; but now the awful truth had thawed her numbness and convulsive shocks of reaction shook her.

"Boy, ye're mad to talk so! Think o' me! What's yer father now? What is 'e? I arsk ye. He's a stiff an' I'm alive. Boy, ye've only thought of one side of this. Ye ain't right about it. Let me tell yer; let me tell yer; let me tell yer, Boy! Yer duty is to me! 'Cause I'm 'ere an' I'm alive, an' I've waited for yer. Oh, Boy! I've waited so long! Ye can't go off; ye can't leave me." A curious pause. She had thought out a way of com-

promising with that awful promise to Dog Leyton; it seared her; but this was Boy—her Boy. “If ye don’t splice me, that . . . that wouldn’t matter, but I love ye, and ye can’t be ’anged. ’Aged! . . .”

Pinkie! Christ! Pinkie! “Stick to yer man. He’s yours. God gave him to you.”

Boy was going to speak, but she tore at his coat, frantically.

“I ain’t gonna let ye, see!” she said tensely. “I ain’t gonna let ye, see! Boy! Boy! Boy! Look at me! Boy!”

Only for a moment Boy swung again in the balance, and when that moment had come to its terrific end he turned away. He could not look into that straining, pain-distorted face, into those eyes from which the tears were leaping out.

As Boy turned away Min’s dress, her wedding dress,—ha, ha!—caught on a chair and rent. At the sound he turned again; the crisis was passed. He threw down a wallet upon the table.

“Father left me some brass. Ye can take the lot.”

She did not see him; she did not hear him. She just kept on. Reason had left. She just kept on.

“Boy! Boy, I ain’t gonna let ye! I ain’t goin’ ter . . .”

His mind worked quickly; something had to be done. Min would go crazy or something. She was looking funny now.

She was still talking—a torrent of words, words,

words. A frantic pleading that did not speak sense; she was tugging at him, tugging at his coat . . . and at his soul.

But it must be done. He was deadly calm; the eerie calm of crisis was set upon his face.

"Min, stop it!"

"Boy, ye can't go; ye can't go! I ain't gonna let ye. Ye can't go, Boy, ye can't. Didn't I say ye don't 'ave ter marry me? I'll fall fer ye anyway, I will."

His eyes narrowed as his thoughts solidified. His was a mission of misery; a task of cruelty. He must apply to her the furious procedure that task implied.

"Stop it, damn ye! Shut up! I'm goin', see!"

He was the surgeon, giving a life in exchange for a limb which, however precious, was worth less. The knife was in his hand. He used it, brutally. Better this way than to leave the member hanging by a shred.

"And ye'd better be brave, because it's over; you an' I. Finished! There's the money. Look 'round fer some one else. Ye can't fall fer *me*, ye know that! 'Cause I won't have ye that way. And I can't marry ye, see! So buck up an' don't howl like some . . ."

Cruel, bitter blows; bitter blows.

"I thought ye'd got pluck."

Min stopped crying suddenly. The note in his voice had found its place. It had hit its mark. It had functioned. Silence . . . and then a tight-

ening of lips, a convulsive shudder that shook the world; and then:

"Go on, matey. Get out! I ain't 'oldin' yer. Don't trouble to come back."

He moved to the door quickly; but foolishly he turned.

Lot's wife! The face behind him had changed. The city was aflame. Vividly he saw, painted over Min, the mouth of the girl in the certain kind of tam-o'-shanter; the girl who had passed out, beyond.

"Go on, matey. Mind the bleedin' step."

"What's up, Min?"

"The bleedin' sky, ain't it?" She laughed.

He paused, hesitated. "What ye gonna do, Min?"

"Do? Blimey, what d'yer think? 'Ere's a nice 'at, and 'ere's a nice bit, a girl what hasn't been 'ad . . . and there's some men out there, ain't there? Ain't there. . . . Get out! Take yer bleedin' brass with ye."

The purse hit the glass partition of the door and smashed it but fell back inside.

The men in the bar turned.

"Blimey, the lovebirds scrappin' already?"

The door opened, and Boy, white-faced, came towards them.

A burst of laughter that sounded like a cheer of victory, as he took his place by Clancey.

He did not see Captain Morgan, followed by Mr. Hop, pass forward into the saloon bar and close

the door. He did not even know it was Clancey who caught his arm when he staggered against the bar, mumbling.

"Give us a drink. . . . Don't matter, anything. . . . Give us a bloody drink."

Words were whispering in his ear. How could he hear what they were saying? Mrs. Ross was talking, miles away, across the bar at him.

"Come on, give us a drink. I'll smash the bloody bar down."

Clancey quickly put Captain Morgan's and Mr. Hop's drinks together in a glass. They'd gone, hadn't they? And gin and rum's a good mixture, ain't it, for a sailor what's mad about something?

"Fine! How goes it, Mr. L.?"

Boy drained the glass and his eyes flamed their answer; an answer that none could read save Looney Luke, who had drawn near.

What Luke read in those blazing eyes was . . . fury!

CHAPTER VIII

SHOULD God Almighty order "world-au-gratin" as a casual side dish for an evening meal, the evening of a million moment-ages, would we form one of the ingredients of a sort of cheese dressing, bathing and floating as a gravy from one piece of light crust to the other, slowly cooking before the sun, sometimes boiling over in volcanic eruption, revolving steadily upon the spit of Time until nicely browned as prescribed by the celestial cookery book?

And when eaten and enjoyed, what then of the Russian Ballet? What then of your new winter hat? What then of Boy and Min?

What of Boy and Min!

Had they been smart folk, protected by a prenatal sophistication, as Reggie Mountainhurst and Cynthia Charteris, the whole affair would have been too delightfully thrilling—such a pity, but, oh, too gorgeously novel!

But Boy was Boy; and Min was Min, wasn't she?

They were real; too real perhaps. Pitched against the concrete floor of their existences they had bounced and bounced, waiting to be struck by the bat of Fate in the game of living; while Mountainhurst and his girl, unsought by the grim

goaders, lay restfully in the cool shade of pleasant flowers.

But King's counsel had taken brief in their trial.

God's delicate salvage for those without advice had imposed itself upon their subconscious vision.

Thus Boy, to spare Min, to cut free, cleanly, had risen and spoken bitter blows upon her defenseless head worthy of a modern David Garrick. Thus to call forth in her that twist which might in retrospect help her to help herself by hating him. It would be unjust of course (that hurt him) but what would it really matter if it helped her?

She might go wrong . . . yes, and he'd done it; . . . yes.

But going wrong alive was better than going right plumb into a silent cavern of black memory misery, a dank tomb for a broken heart.

That may have been the way Boy reasoned it.

At any rate it all made for fury.

Everything blazed and roared in color; every fiber of the situation moved, had vitality. It was life! It moved; and moving things come to some conclusion, sometime.

But Mins don't go wrong; they can't.

Their faces the other way, turning always to right, light and love. Circumstance never has been forged with cunning or edge enough to make such an event remotely possible.

So our minds are at rest as far as this same Min of this same history is concerned.

Min . . . wrong? Never! Never! An uncontrolled right was hers, the right of simple thought, of eyes weeping, perhaps, but looking up, always up, to where hope hid for a moment behind fleeting clouds which were but vapor, however solid black they seemed. Mins look up.

Now, at this instant in events, Boy's Min turned and looked up from the chair in which her head had been buried when she heard the door close again and Morgan's deep voice saying:

"Cryin' on yer weddin' day, Min? That's unlucky."

Min laughed and sat back squarely. She did not speak, but regarded them smilingly as they ponderously took seats and Mr. Hop's fat hand lightly touched the bell upon the table.

Morgan stretched his long legs and regarded her with the silent amusement of one who sees a black kitten, who has fallen into the milk, frantically licking itself black again.

"Startin' in right, eh, Min? Petticoat government for ye, eh?" Morgan observed, solicitously.

Mr. Hop laughed. Not that he was amused; he never was; but his captain had spoken with a view to levity.

Claques like Mr. Hop stimulate a dull play and Morgan was a bad actor.

"Women's rights, I say, eh, Mr. Morgan?"

"Captain Morgan, now, Min."

"You!" and Min laughed again, as Mrs. Ross opened the door.

"A drop o' port, Min?" Morgan's voice was light.

Min smiled as Mrs. Asquith must have smiled when, like our Saviour, she had been offered the world . . . from the roof of New York's Woolworth Building.

"Not for me, matey. One boozier in the family's enough, ain't it?"

"Is Boy boozed?"

"Who said so?"

Morgan gave his order for rum and Mr. Hop said the one word "gin."

Mrs. Ross left in silence and the little party in the saloon bar settled down comfortably. The conversation became impersonal and did not become too engrossing. Min saw to that. It was what naturally would mark an occasion when a captain of the sea sat for a quiet drink along of his mate and a calm, composed, informed young lady of the world . . . and Limehouse.

CHAPTER IX

THAT institution which is called the British public bar seems strangely old these days. Resilience it never had, but it looked new once and once smelt freshly painted.

Now it is desperately old. It is not unlikely that news overseas of the tragic demise of its rich cousin, the American saloon, has given it one of those annoying sinking feelings. A wonderfully rich cousin it had been, it had died without a will, and its funeral service was impressive: a requiem sung by millions on that memorial night of July 6th, 1920. Somehow it made one stop and think.

With the jeering tenors and basses mingled vaguely in a kind of tenderly triumphant harmony the delicate altos and sopranos of American mothers.

And to those whose ears were clear that night came from over somewhere the deliriously hopeful treble of unborn Americans.

Music at that funeral of Johnnie Walker (now gone very weak) and all the rest? Yes; plenty. It was a splendid service to a most important dead; a service of optimism, a service of fervor, a service of prayer for the complete repose of the departed spirit (and the wines and beers) whose monument towers higher than stately Liberty upon her island,

and has tablets made of American memory and chiselled very deeply.

Perhaps fleeting ghosts still haunt the paths familiar during the old life. Ghosts do such things. But Americans are not afraid. They do not tremble; they do not flee; with characteristic courage they pursue, shoot, capture, give welcome to these clinking, awful spirits, as their respective office, state, taste or opinion may direct.

At any rate all bars are spiritualists. They both materialize and communicate with dead. In séances lately the voice of the American dead has whispered to the bars of the whole world (including those on the British waterfronts) the very uncertain hereafter which awaits all bars. Thus, the public bar of Merrie Britain, without hope of anything at all like immortality after life (though goodness knows it has not lived its life without some attention from the clergy), without achievement other than the protruding abdomens of its human sponsors, some merriment, some prison-terms, some flashes of genius and millions of black eyes, waits old and dirty, very fearfully, for the day when it must join that dead American cousin in the tomb. Now and then it bucks up into cheerfulness, but soon it sags, remembering.

The Thistle Public Bar was no exception among bars. In its morning emptiness hope smiled and it looked eagerly for new youth to enter through the door left open by the cellar-man to admit air while he cleaned the step with hearthstone and

gave the whole place a new floor of clean sawdust.

Such vitalizing treatment will make a British bar feel almost young again; will make it, so to speak, shake itself into freshness; but age is age, and booze is booze, and five o'clock in the afternoon found clouds of shag fumes, the stench of many beer puddles and the shouts of much drunken refuse from docks and stately ships within The Thistle's public bar.

"What th' hell does old Luke want here?" Clancey demanded of Red, who had just returned through a little door back into the bar. "Sittin' there drinkin' tea like some old woman! He'd shove a damper onto anything, he would!"

Red agreed drunkenly with his shipmate's criticism of events.

"'Ello, Luke, me old Cockywax, does yer mother know yer out?"

Luke smiled up at Clancey, who lurched toward him, continuing in shouts:

"Get back to yer ship, matey. This ain't no time fer a pretty thing like you to be out."

Luke's smile held as he gazed steadily into Clancey's face, looking down, very near. Then Red's arm swung around and Clancey fell, thump! against the bar.

Red spoke; he seldom did. "Let 'm alone! Wha's matter? 'E's got 's right 'ere, 's much as you. Boy's shick."

Clancey did not hesitate, but walked almost firmly to the little door from which Red had just

emerged. However, as he touched the knob the door opened suddenly and Boy stepped out, his face very white.

"Ailin', Mister L.? Why didn't ye say ye was sick?"

"What?"

"Feel better? Blimey, a first mate sick in weather like this! Never 'eard of such a thing."

Boy grinned. "It's bin cuttin' up pretty choppy for me, mate."

They had reached the bar and Boy leaned in exactly the same spot that had been his for half an hour now, a half hour in which he had drunk continually and confided everything to Clancey, who now again placed a double Scotch beside his elbow, handily.

"Ye'll feel better now. Ye've got room fer more. Good 'ealth, Mister L., and may ye git what yer after."

Boy hesitated. His stomach leaped revolt at the pungent fumes beneath his nose.

It had cost Clancey nearly half a quid to get his first mate halfway cheered up and sick. Blimey he couldn't let him lay down on him now, could he? Not if his name was Clancey, he couldn't! He spoke quickly: "G'wan, mate. I wouldn't tell ye wrong; straight I wouldn't. I've seen a bit o' life in my time, I 'ave. Take a tip from yer Uncle Clan now. Drink up an' tell the world to go an' . . . choke itself."

Boy did not drink immediately.

It all was a new experience. He had never been sick a moment in his life before; and now, suddenly he felt strangely fit and eagerly strong again.

Out of his cleanliness Nature had seized, overpowered and flung the poison from him. He could hear Clancey much more distinctly . . . before he'd caught only snatches of this worldly sailor's advice; they had been vague, but of sinister suggestions; now they had more color and were concise enough to promote a curious, tipsy acquiescence with views born of much experience on many seas and in many ports.

Clancey was still talking, quickly.

"Ye've been too pent up. A man's a man, ain't 'e? And 'e's got to live, ain't 'e? I know 'ow ye feel.

"I was in love once meself with a barmaid down at Lambeth. She got in trouble an' I kept clear. But it caused me a couple o' shivers to keep away!

"She was pretty, all right. Ye know what I did?"

Clancey paused and tinkled his glass significantly.

"'Ad a couple o' drinks, found a blonde, because the other one was dark, and blinkin' well fergot 'er in arf an hour. That's life, Mister L. If ye want to get out o' love 'ave a drink or two an' a gal or two an' forget."

A gal or two!

That part of Clancey's advice hit Boy curiously. To Boy a gal or two meant something he had never

had, but had heard a lot about. A gal or two! Yes . . . he'd often wondered. But the thought of a gal or two, as applied to himself, always had seemed a kick in the face for Min. Black curls and dancing eyes were all right in songs, but not all right for him while Min loved and trusted him. So a gal or two, a million or two gals, had lain in their soiled, lazy lace, unconscious of the fact of Boy.

But now there was no Min, was there? And Clancey might be right.

He loved Min, though. He would always love her. Of course he would. And without her he was only half of himself. He felt different, alone. Drink had only made him sick.

He must do something. Clancey might be right.

A gal or two. . . . A gal or two. How bloody silly it sounded! Like a fag or two, or a sandwich or two, or a bottle or two. But this argument of Clancey's half held his interest, for which he was subconsciously grateful.

So, he drained his drink and felt it burning down. He would have a look at a gal or two—no more than that; no; no more. But he'd got some brass. He could afford that. Clancey had picked up the wallet for him where it had lain on the floor, waiting to be pinched.

There might be some fun—a lot of fun—something to laugh at, something to make you forget, in that idea of a gal or two! Let her go! Come

on, what's the use of standing around moping! Hell!

The whiskey functioned.

Come on, trot out the fun! He'd got to kill a man and find a mother. Some blinkin' fun first; what say?

And that staunch friend Clancey warmed heroically: "'Ere's to it! Blimey, the lid's off! Fill 'em up! To hell with the ship! If she puts out, well, there's more than one bloody ship in the world, ain't there?"

"Not arf there ain't," Boy said, trying to be enthusiastic.

He then lit his cigar, the one that Min had bent a bit when her fingers had caught the top of his pocket. Cigars burn the mouth; this did, properly, as it should have done; and the drink burned it on top of that; and his hands and ears burned. His conscience went up in a burst of flame and lighted up the world. . . . But . . . Hell!

"'Ello, Clan." The girl in the certain kind of tam-o'-shanter stood beside them.

"Talk o' the devil!"

Yes, she'd take a drop o' Scotch. She oughtn't to because she'd had no dinner and drink on an empty stomach, you know . . . but . . .

"A sandwich for the lady. Come on!" Clancey was no poor sport. "Ham, and cut it thick!"

Clancey's eyes met Boy's. His glance was the smiling beam of a Rolls Royce salesman. "A bit o' real Scotch. . . . Bonny, ain't she, Mister L.?"

"I reckon so," and Boy, confused, caught dull eyes on his; eyes that seemed to say, "I like you, please"; eyes that seemed to want to reach out to this dark young man who seemed to stand on the other side of the globe from her, keeping a distance that she did not deny by rights was his.

The lady raised her glass.

"'Ere's to ye, Clan, and my best regards, Mister."

Then the certain kind of mouth pursed, sucking onto the rim of the thick glass; and as she drank the certain kind of eyes peered up at Boy, who had turned his head away, because a newcomer had addressed him.

Therefore the lady's glass hit the bar dangerously and she spoke quickly, angrily: "Get 'er away, Clan. Get 'er away. I won't stay if she comes into the party."

Clancey looked up, as he handed her the sandwich on a plate and then crossed quickly to Boy who had turned to the newcomer.

"Never mind 'er, Mister L. Don't have no truck with 'er."

Clancey stood firmly between his first mate and Tillie.

Tillie did not move. She just stood there looking up at Clancey's back. Boy could see the top of her dirty hat, peeping over Clancey's shoulder. — "Get out, Clancey. I was talkin' to some one."

Clancey did not move, but continued quickly: "Terrible, Mister L.; bloody awful. Take a tip

from me now; I know. You'll never sack 'er. All she wants is a gallon o' gin and a lot o' gab. I know 'em. Leave it to me now, will ye, Mister L.?"

Boy answered him, a note of hardness in his voice. "Well, blimey, don't stand in front of 'er like that. She ain't no bloomin' fireplace."

Clancey moved aside, grudgingly. "Well, don't say I didn't warn ye." And he turned again to his own girl.

Yes, Clancey knew 'em. Boy looked down into the face of Tillie, the same Tillie who had tapped the bar at breakfast-time that morning; the same Tillie who had given those sailors their answer back, that answer that had sent Min upstairs, singing the filth out of her ears. Boy did not know that, of course.

Tillie stood before Boy now, looking up, the yellow light upon her face catching a funny smile that shone there steadily. She did not speak at once, but took a faltering step forward as if to diminish the possibility of another separation such as Clancey's intrusion had caused.

"Ye've got manners, sailor boy."

Boy grinned. "Same to you, lady."

"Just like a little prince you are. A little prince; and gracious, too, I say." Her thin strip of a mouth stretched into a laugh that had no sound.

"And what will yer Ladyship take fer refreshment this nice evenin'?"

"At yer Royal Highness' pleasure, a drop o' gin,

cold," said Tillie, quickly in the spirit of it, picking up her skirts and dropping him a low curtsy. But she shouldn't have tried it after so many gins. She overbalanced backward and fell upon the sawdust. Laughter roared as she sat there helplessly, looking up.

It was Looney Luke who hurried to help Boy to pull her to her feet and seat her in the nearest chair by the nearest table, and Luke went back and bent to pick up her old black purse at the same moment that Boy did.

"Boy! . . . Boy!"

Boy looked up quickly at Luke's half confidential voice.

"What's up, Luke?"

"Come back with me, Boy."

Boy regarded him steadily for a moment. The whiskey spoke furiously: "Who arst you to interfere?"

Luke's eyes searched eyes that he did not know, but Boy's eyes, all the same.

"Boy, come back along with me."

Boy's lips tightened. "Aw, get out an' let me alone."

After a level-eyed but not persistent look Luke left him alone, turning and passing out into the wet street quickly.

When Boy went to Tillie's table a big gin and a big whiskey had been kindly placed there by Red, and Clancey was bending over Tillie saying something which Boy could not help hearing.

"... Scotch ... an' plenty of it. 'E's got over a 'undred quid on 'im. ... Keep sober, if ye can. ... Ye're safer than a young 'un. ... I'll be back, see?" Clancey stood up, saw Boy standing there, grinned and awkwardly returned to his lady, who was amusing herself by pushing Red's hand away.

Boy sat down quickly at the table beside Tillie. "What'd 'e say to ye, that bloke?"

Tillie, noisily sipping her gin, looked up at him. Then she stopped and lowered her hand, the entire breadth of which clutched the gin glass wisely. "Just a little prince you are."

Boy struck the table. "What'd that there bloke say to ye about my money?" Suspicion edged his words sharply.

"'E was just bein' nice, sailor boy, that's all."

"Wha'd'ye mean, bein' nice?"

Tillie sipped again and held up her glass. "Don't worry, sailor. Ye're safe enough along o' me. Nobody won't do nothin' to ye while I'm around."

Boy grinned. Silly old fool! He spoke: "What would ye do?"

Tillie smiled with a supreme confidence of gin. "Let 'em try; let 'em try. That's all, sailor; let 'em try."

Boy glanced up as Clancey left with his lady, looking back from the door to wink knowingly.

Was Clancey after his money? He'd said something about jumping ship. He was a dirty tyke,

anyway, Clancey was. He'd give himself away proper by things he'd said. Yes; let him try, the dirty swine; let him try! Boy was surprised by the sudden consciousness that his mind was saying the same words Tillie had used. He smiled and raised his glass. Tillie flourished hers.

"Let 'em try, sailor boy."

Boy laughed outright. "Try what?"

Tillie was silent.

"Try what?"

Tillie looked up blankly. "I dunno, sailor, but let 'em try. Let everybody try, I say. Why not?" Her voice trailed down into her gin.

Mrs. Ross came, an unusual thing, and wiped the table. She touched Boy on the shoulder.

"Laddie, I would speak wi' ye."

"Oh, ye would? Oy, ye would?" Tillie's voice came up. "Can't ye see he's engaged with a lady? He is. And he's a gentleman, too, an' he's proved it, just like a prince!" And Tillie clutched for his sleeve and held it.

Boy glanced up at Mrs. Ross. Something warned him not to move. Mrs. Ross would speak of Min and . . . no! No! He couldn't listen to anything serious; not now.

Mrs. Ross was used to reading still faces. Did not the brave, dead Angus speak to her always from his crayon portrait? And so she left quickly.

Boy looked after her.

"Bloody cheek women 'ave, ain't they? I hate women!" Tillie spoke with husky conviction.

Boy was silent and drank again, as the waters of memory surged against a crumbling dam.

Tillie's gin gone, she leaned forward again. "Buy another, sailor."

Clancey was right. This dirty old tot wanted a gallon of gin and a lot of gab. Where had Looney Luke gone? Boy wanted to talk with him. Still he had been rude to him and he felt in no mood to apologize or climb down about anything.

He half rose. But where was he going? What else was there to do?

His eyes ached. He wanted to punch some one in the nose. Argh! What the hell!

"Will ye, sailor?"

"Aw, shut up!"

The cellar-man came and picked up their empty glasses. Boy did not see him; he had closed his eyes. God! he'd like to punch somebody in the nose! What the hell! What the hell!

What was it all about? Where was Min now? Now, at this minute?

Argh! His spirit was sinking fast. His eyes closed tight and his head fell forward upon his arm.

He did not hear Tillie say to the cellar-man, "Two more large ones, Cocky." He did not feel her hand upon his head and her voice inquiring if he wanted to be sick. He did not see the little face of Min peep through the broken glass from the saloon bar.

How could he? Boy had died for a moment.

He did not know. In dying does one know? Some believe and thus they know. But what could Boy believe? He did not know.

He wanted to punch some one on the nose, with all his strength. He wanted to fight . . . to fight, free, anywhere, out, out . . . to where? And why and for what?

Drink! Clancey's whispers had carried him shoulder high towards lighted palaces, but he'd been too heavy, so they dropped him off into the gutter—the largest palaces have gutters near them—into a wet, foul gutter—foul and wet, but with a foulness that assailed only his nose, and a wet that could not penetrate a body made immune by the fresh, clean spray of sea-thoughts from within and the raw brine from without.

Yes, Boy had died for a moment . . . in a gutter.

Under stress some men, like runaway horses, dash forward, and then suddenly to right or left as obstacles or otherwise determine. The left may be right or the right may be wrong, but forward they gallop, as certain of stopping or being stopped as the coming of the night.

Thus Boy had galloped and stopped, torn and bruised. No frantic cape or stone wall had stopped him; he had just stopped. Had he been lighter he might have dashed on . . . to what ?

But Boy was heavy, too heavy with the ballast of an inner truth.

The soldier in line to the swirl of the band

senses that ballast. The man who has slammed the curtained door upon a second unfaithful kiss feels the greater thrill of truth clattering down marble steps beside his feet. The smiling spy, dying for an ideal, walks to the scaffold with the light-heavy tread of his inward truth. The drunkard, led forward in the rain, to kneel beside a hoarse, dripping salvationist, feels suddenly from somewhere the steadying thrill of this drag of the power of gravity beneath his feet. There is no inch on earth where man can stand—on snows, ships, settled, happy land, or scorching desert—that does not hold in trust for him that answering welcome for his weight . . . of truth.

And God is truth, above, below and around. Earth called to earth and then to God, and when Boy had bent forward he had been dismantled for an instant for divine readjustment.

The busy moment past, truth flamed, relit, in his eyes that looked up suddenly into Tillie's . . . and smiled.

CHAPTER X

THROUGH the broken glass Min watched him smile.

There was that dirty, drunken old tot with her Boy! And he was smiling! Sober? and smiling; the smile that had been Min's!

It struck her as rather funny and she turned back into the saloon, laughing. She did not stop laughing. She laughed and laughed, higher, shriller, a furious laughter . . . that Mr. Hop, who knew something about doctoring, diagnosed mentally as hysterics.

He rose and, bending her forward, patted her back. But she kept on laughing . . . laughing . . . laughing.

"Ha, ha! Errrch! Ha, ha! He, he, he! Bloody funny! That was . . ." She was fighting for breath.

Morgan rose and took her hand. Even he knew something was wrong.

Mr. Hop pinched her leg between sharp, strong thumb and finger nails and ran a ladder up her wedding stocking. "'Ysterics, that's what 'tis."

"Something ticklin' 'er? Is that what it is, what ye said?"

The terrible laughter continued. Fate was

amused. Fate's sense of humor is cruel. Min was laughing . . . laughing . . . laughing . . . choking with laughter.

"Herr" . . . "herr" . . . errrch! . . . 'e's got to kill some one! Ha, ha! . . . What's the good of a h-h-husban' what's bin 'anged?" She caught her breath and coughed painfully.

Again Mr. Hop pulled her forward and patted her back. Her head came up again and her eyes rolled back. Her hands stretched out; she must have been trying to say something which was very funny, because she kept on laughing.

"What—ha, ha!—a bloody weddin' day!"

Mrs. Ross came in at that moment and crossing quickly, took Min's arm. Her woman's ear had caught that laughter and understood. She led the laughing little girl from the room and the Captain and Mr. Hop could hear the laughter diminishing as Min went up and up and up the stairs. "Ha, ha, he, he herrch!"

"Kill a man? 'Im? 'E couldn't kill a rat!" Morgan leaned back and glanced interrogatively at Mr. Hop, who said:

"Another spot, captain?"

Morgan nodded. "Kill a man! 'Im? 'Agh! . . ."

Luke stood, a silent figure, across the narrow alley that crept off from the waterfront, down around beside The Thistle. From this point he could see all doors. The rain beat down and The Thistle's big lamp gleamed upon his bald forehead.

A man fell out and across the alley, in three

running, staggering steps, and Red hit the wall, rolled over, coughed and lay very still.

Luke did not look down. Men were warm, wet bags of smell . . .

Was Luke quarrelling with that Mate to whom he always prayed? His look suggested that as possible. He did not move; he seemed scarcely to breathe. A suggestion of fearful suspension was with him . . . wet, warm bags of smell . . . men . . . men . . . and they were in His image!

Yes, Luke had questioned his God!

CHAPTER XI

BOY had heard Min's laugh, as perhaps every one in the place had. But he did not understand. She was happy, bless her! He sighed. It all made him feel better, lighter, almost composed. His drink sat untouched. Til had had only one more. She had not spoken, so he had been able to think . . . easy thoughts, colored by the ominous fury of their import . . . the man he was to find.

Yes, you've got to go ahead steady on a thing like that. Red had told him about *The Spray* getting out on the tide.

Well, *The Spray* would get out, but without the first mate. Leith would hold him for a while, at least, while he nosed around a bit.

Min? She'd go back most likely to London. He'd give the money to Mrs. Ross, most of it. He'd want a bit for himself to get away after the . . . after the . . . killing.

A thought: the man might be dead already. Then Dog would have seen him down in hell and there would have settled him, for himself!

Still, even Dog couldn't kill a man what's dead, not knowin' which damned soul he was; Dog was dead himself, but even dead he wouldn't know the man, unless the woman, too, was there, dead, too;

and she wasn't, because Dog had told him that she was in Leith.

Blimey, what a mix-up it was getting to be! How did his father know she was in Leith? How had he found out? There hadn't been any letter. Boy had looked when he had gone through all the papers left behind by Dog in the stuffy cabin of *The Lady Spray*.

But the thought had a happy throb in it: *The man might be dead already!*

But . . . he rather thought he hoped he wasn't. The matter had taken grim possession of his mind, even of his blood corpuscles, as it had controlled those of his father. He, himself, *wanted* to kill this man now; he was set on it. Calm thoughts now . . . terribly calm; the ominous mental thunder of premeditation.

Min? Yes, if he was dead already, there was Min. But even then, though she wed him comfortably, she would not be marrying the complete man. No, in such a case, he would have been cheated out of doing something that now he found himself wanting to do, aching to do, that was essential to the perfection of his personality. His fists clenched and suddenly he drew his breath in hissing, loudly enough to wake Tillie, who had been dozing.

She looked up, blinking. "What's it, sailor?"

He turned. He had forgotten her.

She sat there, quietly, her hand closed around

her glass so that you could not see whether it was full or empty.

"Nothing. Want another?"

Tillie smiled, strangely. "Ye're a funny boy."

"Why?"

"I was watching ye. Do ye dope?"

"Dope? Me? No! Why?"

"Ye don't? G'wan, ye do! I shan't give ye away. Tillie knows."

"Aw, shut up. Don't get saucy!"

Tillie leaned forward confidentially. "I know a Chink what's got some; half a quid a go."

"Shut up there, will ye? I've been all right with ye, ain't I?"

"Ye 'ave, I'll say that. That's why I was tellin' . . ."

Boy interrupted her quickly. "What made ye think I dope? Yer mad!"

"All of us is that, sailor; didn't yer know that?"

"You are. I ain't."

Tillie actually put her glass down. She whispered the greatest secret in the world. "Ah, ye think ye ain't, but ye are. All on us are."

Boy regarded her with new intentness. Blimey, here was a funny one! He asked: "'Ave ye ever been put away? 'Ave ye?"

Tillie paused and smiled, the wisdom of ages upon her brow. "Yes, I've been away, but not for bein' mad."

"What for, then?"

Tillie half closed her eyes and her mouth was still smiling. "What's a woman like me put away for?"

"Booze?"

Tillie glanced down at her half-filled glass. She actually pushed it away. "No, but that had, allus has, somethin' to do with it."

Boy sat right round now, very interested. "What d'yer go up for?"

Tillie laughed. "Up? Ye mean down. Women like me never go up; it's always down, matey." And changing her mood, Tillie drained her drink suddenly. "Down . . . just like that. Buy another, sailor."

Boy rose and carried her glass to the bar, Tillie peering after him. Just like a little prince he was; young, too.

Poor Tillie! The young 'uns were usually pretty rough and the old 'uns too drunk to be. But here was one who hadn't slapped her on the back yet, knocking the breath out of her; one who hadn't said, "Well, Til, ye dirty old doll, what about it?"

Well, a sailor was a sailor, wasn't he? and gin was gin. And here was a good double gin before her now, placed there silently by the young prince, who sat again. After a moment of dreamy inhalation from the glass in her hand she commented casually:

"Ye're all straight again. Ye ain't no boozier."

Boy smiled. You could bet your blooming life

he wasn't! He'd remember being sick like he was a little while ago for the rest of his natural life!

His face straightened suddenly as Tillie astonishingly counseled him: "Let it alone, sailor boy. Take a tip from me."

Boy regarded her steadily. Now that he really looked at it he saw that hers was a tragic face. No; Tillie wasn't old, but . . . Boy or anybody else could take that tip from her, all right! Suddenly he felt differently toward her.

"Why did ye drink to-day, sailor?"

Boy looked away. Blimey, what a question! Why? If she only knew!

But of course he couldn't tell her . . . she wouldn't understand. She was past all that. She'd think he was soppy.

He answered, a dash of the real whimsical Boy in his tone: "Oh, a bloke takes a drink once in a while, ye know."

Tillie looked steadily at him. You may not believe it, but Tillie knew men. She knew life—the life that had kicked her. She had to know something about it even to try to dodge the boot, which, at the best, seldom missed her. Her hand touched his sleeve and she spoke so softly that Boy only just heard: "I hadn't a right to ask. Sorry, matey."

Boy shook his head, quickly. She wasn't so dusty, this old tot, after all. She'd had quite a nice voice when she said that. "That's all right, ma'am. Ye've never been in love, have yer?"

Tillie laughed again; a laugh that actually sounded; a laugh with depth enough to sound. "Love? . . . Bah!"

"What's funny about it?"

"Love is!"

"Why?"

"There ain't no such thing." Her voice snapped her conviction, and a note in it arrested him.

"I 'ad a father always said that."

Tillie nodded her head and banged her glass down. "Then yer father was right, sailor; he was right, all right."

Boy's eyes turned away for a moment, meditatively. "But he changed his mind, though, later."

Tillie's head was still nodding. "Men change—but women don't . . . never."

His thoughts flew to Min. She had changed. She'd have to change back one day, when . . .

His thoughts reverted suddenly to his task—his mission. He moved in his seat.

"I got to go!"

Tillie's hand came again on his arm. "Don't go, matey. Yer friend's comin' back."

"To hell with 'im!"

"'E's all right, that friend is. 'E likes ye. He was motherin' ye 'round 'ere as though ye were 'is child."

"I don't want no one to mother me."

Tillie smiled.

"All right, matey, if ye've got to go, go. And—

er—yer friend promised Tillie a little something fer takin' care o' ye while ye was . . ."

A pound note found its way into her hand. She gasped.

Just like a little prince he was in every way! Her eyes watered, her voice softly grateful. "Thank ye, sailor boy."

He rose to leave but glanced quickly down as she asked:

"Might ye 'ave any word for yer friend when 'e comes back?"

Yes, that was a thought. He had better send word to the ship that he was jumping. Nobody had told him that Morgan and Mr. Hop were in back in the saloon-bar.

He knew some one was in there, because he'd heard Min's laugh. He rather wanted to peep in through that broken glass, but how could he trust himself to look at Min again?

Anyway, he had better leave word for Clancey to tell Luke to take care of his things aboard. Of course there might be time for him to get back to Luke himself, for a moment, now, right away. But then he'd have to apologize to Luke for what he'd said and he didn't feel like anything like that . . . not now . . . not now. He was calm enough . . . but his calm included perfect readiness to go at some one. He was going to be calm in just that way until he found . . .

Where should he go first? What was the first step?

There was Mrs. Ross; he'd have to talk with her, just as soon as Min had gone back to London. Better not talk to her now, because she'd only bring Min up to him.

But Mrs. Ross he was sure would know something about the people he was after. He'd talk to her later.

In the meantime he'd nose around a bit down at the Robin Hood and along the front, and then at the Company's office, after *The Spray* was out.

The first thing to do was to leave the money with Mrs. Ross for Min.

What a blooming crime it was to treat little Min that way!

Where would she go now? Back to the Rest? No; that wasn't likely. Where would he be able to find her afterwards? . . . if it came that he wanted to find her . . . and he would want to, whatever happened.

Ah, Mrs. Ross would get that for him, too. Mrs. Ross was going to be pretty useful.

There she was now. He looked across and smiled.

Mrs. Ross shook her head.

He'd got her all ruffed up the wrong way now, by the look of it. He'd have a talk with her right away, as soon as the saloon bar was cleared. Yes; that was the best thing to do.

He turned and stooped over Tillie. "Would ye ask my friend, ye know which—the one with the

souse on, that went out, with that girl—to tell Luke . . .”

Tillie blinked. He was dazing her. Tillie's days of responsibility were long past. “Don't make it much, sailor boy. I ain't got such a memory. Now if ye wrote it . . .”

Boy smiled. Aw, she'd forget it or lose it, anyway. . .

“Don't matter, Ma. So long!”

Tillie looked up quickly. She was hurt. Then they both looked off and up as a voice spoke at the door.

“Oo's 'ere fra *The Lady Spray*?”

Boy did not move forward because Tillie caught his hand so tightly that her nails pierced his flesh. He glanced down quickly. Her lips were moving, but she did not say anything. He looked off to where Lamey, of *The Spray*, was telling the tall man who had spoken to go into the saloon bar. Boy shook his hand free and crossed to Lamey.

“What's 'e want, that bloke?”

“Skipper. 'E's inside along o' Mr. Hop, 'aving one.”

Boy peeped through the hole in the glass and saw the tall figure of Morgan talking to the man who had just entered, and a convulsive shudder passed through him.

Morgan! Morgan fitted into his scheme of things damn well just now! He'd like a crack at that big swine before he jumped *The Spray*! He

was big, Morgan was; but, oh God, how he felt like kicking the lights out of him! . . . Now!

And . . . he'd been in there with Min, hadn't he? It might have been he what had made Min laugh. He might have been ridiculing him, boy, to Min! Would Min laugh at that?

By the last thing he remembered of Min she would do anything, in the mood she was in.

And he had sat there all the time without knowing who was in there with her! What a dirty snake! He'd creep in anywhere, he would!

Even now Min might have gone over to him. She had sounded happy enough. . . . She couldn't, though; not with Morgan. She hated him as much as Boy did.

He looked in again.

The three men were sitting and he couldn't see Min.

She had gone upstairs, most likely, to change her dress. Did she have one to change? He didn't know that.

Blimey, there were so many new things he would have liked to know about Min!

Wouldn't he like to rush in there and tell Morgan all he had wanted to say to him all these years? There had been Noah, the parrot . . . and then what Min had told him about that dirty . . .

His body shook. He wanted to drink again. Should he? Should he crash in that bar now? You've only to die once! The only thing was if he was bested—and Morgan had all the odds in

height and weight—he wouldn't be so good for the other one he had to find; the one he had to find and tear to pieces . . . r-r-rip! His every muscle quivered, and he turned impatiently as a voice at his elbow: "Lady wants you over there."

Looking in the direction of his informant's gesture he saw Tillie beckoning, but he turned his back deliberately. To hell with her!

But somehow he felt a twinge of shame. No; that wasn't the way to treat nobody; not even her. It wasn't right.

That whimsical softness latent in Boy's nature could not be diminished even in moments of his greatest stress.

So he turned back and waved his hand with a gesture that said, "In a minute." She only wanted another gin, of course; so he ordered one at the bar.

While he waited for it to be handed to him the laugh of three men came through the space broken in the glass and above it Morgan's voice:

"'E melted up all soft before 'e went. 'E weren't so tough . . . not much more than a bag o' wind."

Boy took a step in the direction of that insulting voice. He faced the broken door. Was Morgan talking of his father? Was he? . . . Was he? . . . Was he? . . . Blast him. "Bag o' wind!"

Something checked Boy. He swallowed and choked down a cry that came to his throat. No; he'd wait; he'd wait; and when he'd done the other

job (calm, terrible thoughts these!) . . . when he'd done the other job and the police were after him he'd come back here and he'd hide and wait. If it were years, he'd wait.

And that waiting would be ended when he'd murdered Morgan. . . . With his hands, he'd murder him!

You can't hang anybody twice!

When his father's job was done he'd do a little job for himself . . . a little something on his own account! . . . Yes, he'd wait!

He picked up the double gin from the bar quickly. It was as if the sharp, determined action sealed his mental pact within himself; anything alert and positive would have served. And also he had to wrest his eyes and thoughts away from that door. He must recapture his original intention or before he had attended to it he'd reveal it, he'd prematurely spring and smash and rip . . .

He placed the gin before Tillie with a hand trembling from his tension. "'Ere ye are. Is that what ye wanted?"

Tillie patted the chair next to her and he sat down.

"Are ye from *The Lady Spray*?"

"Why?"

"'Cause I asked some one and they said ye was mate."

"That's right."

She leaned across. "There's only one *Lady Spray* out o' London, ain't there?"

"There's only one *Lady Spray* out of anywhere." Boy Leyton's own voice mingled vaguely but proudly with the gruffer tone of the man in Leith seeking vengeance.

"Leyton's *Lady Spray* ye mean?"

He glanced at her quickly. "What say?"

"Dog Leyton's ship?"

He nodded.

"Dog ashore?"

He shook his head.

Tillie was silent. It was as if she were treading cautiously in a vague, dark place. Her thin frame seemed strangely alive. She lifted her glass with an abrupt, unnatural movement, not to drink, but just to be doing something—anything; to cover an embarrassment that would have been obvious to any one but Boy, who regarded her with slight interest. Perhaps she was some one whom his father once had known. No; that wasn't possible; Dog always had hated these. But it didn't matter, anyway; and Tillie was speaking again:

"Where's Dog now?"

Boy's lips thinned as he spoke the one word, quietly, "Dead."

Tillie did not move, but her glass did. It dropped from her hand to the table, noisily rolled, fell to the floor and smashed.

A few who glanced round because of the noise saw the young sailor put out his hand to save an old woman from falling off her chair. Ha, ha, Tillie was drunk!

But Tillie at this moment was terribly sober. Something seemed to have snapped within her, if within her there had been anything taut enough to snap. Her eyes looked funny; and Boy would have asked for help to lay her down on one of the benches if he had not decided immediately in himself that she should sit there and revive and answer his question . . . the question he now asked for the third time from between his teeth.

"Did ye know 'im?"

Tillie's lips moved. "Did I know who?"

Ah, she was trying to retreat.

"You knew Dog Leyton." He gripped her arm. At any other time it would have hurt her. Now she did not even wince.

He pinched harder.

Tillie's lips moved again, but not because of the pinching. That was evident. She spoke quietly . . . to any one . . . every one . . . herself . . . the world.

"Dog Leyton . . . dead!" Then she smiled and pulled her arm free, viciously. "Aw, get away!"

The cellar-man was picking up the broken glass. He spoke: "Want another?"

Tillie shook her head. She tried to rise.

The cellar-man passed to the bar.

Boy pulled her back into her seat. This old tot knew something. He could swear she knew something. She'd been round a long time and she'd known Dog. He was sure of that. He spoke quickly but very quietly:

"Did ye know Dog Leyton well? Did ye?"

"When did he die?"

"Two days out."

"What of?"

"Fits."

Tillie shook her head. . . . Her lips repeated, "Fits . . . fits . . . fits . . ." and kept on saying the one word; and she actually smiled.

She still smiled as Boy spoke: "What ye grinnin' at? Did ye know 'im?"

Tillie was talking to herself: "Fits . . . mad . . . Dog!"

Yes, she'd known Dog; Boy now was sure of that. He shot an intuitive question, suddenly, disarmingly: "Did ye like 'im?"

Tillie's face was like a mask but her head nodded slowly.

"Did ye?"

"Once."

"When?"

"Once."

"But when?"

Tillie looked up: "What's that to you, sailor? Ye got a cheek!"

Boy was insistent. "I know I 'ave. What about it? When?"

"What's that to you?"

"A lot more'n ye think."

She looked at him in silence for a moment and her face became knowing, rather sly. "Yes, that's right; ye're mate. No, ye ain't mate, either." She

turned on him suddenly. "Ye ain't mate of *The Spray*. Morgan's mate. Ah, ah, ye see I know, I do, I do!"

Yes; the old tot did damn well know! . . . something . . . and he was going to know that something too. She looked too damned knowing!

He asked point blank: "Did ye know Dog Leyton's wife?"

Tillie sat still, except that she slumped into a crouch as though waiting for something to drop upon her from the ceiling. Boy watched.

Yes; this woman knew. By the sheerest accident he had stumbled upon his trail. She knew something . . . probably a lot . . . and she was going to say what she knew or he'd know the reason why. His voice was gruff.

"Come on, did ye know 'er?" He actually shoved her arm, irritably.

She pulled away. "What's it got to do with you?"

"I told ye; a lot."

She turned squarely upon him. "Ye sure Dog is dead?"

"I told ye so."

"Well, what about 'is wife, then?"

"That's what I'm askin' ye."

"Well, ye can ask on. What should I know of 'er?"

Boy paused, trying to think out a strategy. You couldn't bully this old tot. He'd got to kid her along a bit. What could he say?

Tillie was fidgeting. Her hand seemed lost without the glass. She gathered her shawl about her, restlessly.

Boy noted this. Certainly he must not let her go. If she was bent on going, if she did go, he'd blinkin' well follow her. He was on the track of something and nothing on God's earth was going to shake him off.

He asked a question: "Is the wife dead?"

Tillie turned. "Who?"

"Dog's wife."

Tillie laughed; one of her laughs that had sound. "Deader'n a nail."

Boy started quickly. "When?"

And now, almost but not quite suddenly, a change had come in her. She looked strangely wistful, this old tot did; and some one coming in at the door let some wind in that blew strands of her gray hair flutteringly back over her dirty hat. "Find out, Cocky."

Blimey, an idea! Get her soused again; that was it. All of a sudden she'd sobered up. Where was his bloomin' brains not to have thought of that? As if he couldn't measure brains with this old . . .

"Have another gin, ma'am."

And history was made as Tillie shook her head.

"Yer a nice boy, just like a little prince."

This time she really rose.

He rose with her. "Ye can't go out. It's rainin'

cats and dogs. Sit down. Have another." He put his hand upon her shoulder.

She glanced quickly at him as if a sudden thought . . . but if so it went as suddenly as it had come. All her thoughts did that.

What had brought this one into her head? She had been looking at the back of a tall some one who had come out of the saloon bar and walked to the little door at the back.

The door banged.

Her eyes narrowed and fixed upon the door. Her body shook. She was looking at that door.

Boy knew it had been Morgan who had passed through and he wondered at the strange effect of this entirely casual occurrence upon Tillie. Her look arrested him. He glanced at the door and then back again at the set white mask of the woman beside him. It was very interesting, this. He touched her arm lightly. She seemed strangely taller and she sat down automatically.

"Do ye know 'im . . . that man?" Boy asked.

"Yes; I know 'im. I know 'im."

Tillie turned her head away and thin, blue-black veins wound bewilderingly up and down and round the side of her wrinkled forehead, the side that Boy could see. She suddenly had become possessed of a subtle strength, a strength he sensed, a strength that called to his own pent-up venom. It was the unspoken message of fury.

Suddenly he found himself drawn to the old lady . . . no, she was not old . . . she was a

crouching, almost virile woman with gray hair fluttering down and a curious, little palpitating jump where vein lines met upon her forehead in violent junction. He leaned across.

"You hate 'im, do ye?"

Tillie turned and her eyes spoke her answer.

It was as if a tigress snarled, a wounded tigress, bleeding, lost and wandering in a jungle-night of silent agony, her crimson trail winding round and about and round in endless, uncertain circles, and then the dawn and a more meaning, definite snarl as she sees in the clearing the sleeping form of the hunter who has wounded her, lying arrogantly calm beside the drying skin of the cub she loved.

Boy leaned forward. "So do I."

Words hissed in his ear. "Kill 'im, then, sailor."

"I'm goin' ter."

"When?"

Whispering, heads together now, in a new intimacy of tense interest, black and gray . . . ominous figures these two.

Earlier they had said lightly together, "Let 'em try! Let 'em try!" But then they had been talking about nothing, and Boy had laughed at it and she had wondered what she was talking about.

But now, from out of somewhere, had come a some one who had tried . . . tried what?

Boy spoke: "What did he do to ye?"

She turned, very much the tigress. "Don't ask, sailor. Kill 'im! Kill 'im!"

There was a mysteriously powerful urge in her voice, an urge that was answered in the trembling of Boy's fists.

But again suddenly his mind flew back to his mission. Couldn't he stop jumping ahead of himself, that way? This woman had switched his mind again. He must hold his course. His questioning returned to the main issue.

"Tell me about Dog Leyton's wife."

She regarded him steadily. "Why?"

"'Cause I got a message for 'er."

It seemed an age before she spoke. "If I tell ye, ye'll never say?"

"Ye said she was dead. Where is she?"

"If I tell ye, ye'll never say?"

"No."

Tillie put her bag away from her, across the little table and turned squarely to him. Now she was openly bargaining. "If I tell ye that, will ye tell me somethin'?"

"What?"

"Did the boy live?"

"What boy?"

"Dog's boy; the young 'un."

A curious feeling took possession of Boy. Her gaze was full upon him, was like fingers; he could feel its touch . . . it was soft . . . agreeable. Was this all some mad trick?

He felt strangely involved in a whirling mechanism of which he was a vital part. He felt that

the world was looking at him. It was a moment before he could collect himself and answer.

"Yes, he's 'round."

"Oh! Where?" It was a queer, hoarse whisper. There was a tragic awful note in it.

He trembled violently and then he asked suddenly, "Who did Dog's wife go away with?"

She opened her mouth to speak at once, then checked herself.

"Who was it?"

She knew . . . she knew . . . he knew she knew!

She spoke: "What was Dog's message fer 'er?"

"The message was for her, not you, . . . but . . ."

She touched his hand. His whole body thrilled.

He leaned forward and looked deeply into her eyes. Something was there; something that only a son's eyes could recognize. God signaled gently out of them . . . out of eyes that had become clear and blue, that had become the fathomless eyes of mother.

Her mouth, now beautiful and full, trembled.

Gray strands of her hair fluttered nervously, as if they had known and been waiting.

He knew what she was going to say; he knew! Could it be true?

Infinite beauty sat before him—gray, pink and white. God smiled. The world spun around, kicked out of the way; the sun flamed out.

She spoke. He did not hear. He knew; he knew! Oh, God in heaven, at last, at last! *A mother to kiss and say "mother" to!*

Lamey grinned when the young sailor put his arms around old Tillie's neck and kissed her on the lips. Lamey did not hear Boy whisper in his own mother's ear: "Dog Leyton sent that for you." Lamey did not understand that that long, warm kiss, which made Tillie weep hot tears upon Boy's cheek was the kiss of all history.

And Tillie did not know; Boy meant that she should not. She only knew that something had happened; something that breathed of sunlight and a forgotten God that smiled again.

Boy sat back after his hand had wiped her tears away.

She looked at him, tremblingly, wonderingly.

A mother to kiss and say "mother" to? No, no; not yet!

The little door at the back slammed. They turned together. Tillie spoke:

"That's 'im ye asked about!"

"Who?"

Then Boy knew! He knew!

A cry rang out:

"Christ . . . Morgan!"

Fury!

Morgan stopped. A hush had fallen. His eyes blinked; his vision cleared. He saw. Yes, it was—it was she looking up at him, the beauty from Millwall, Dog's wife and his own woman in Leith, the one that was sick, the one that was put away, the one he'd slipped off from when she was down and dying, when he was tired of her.

It was she! And this wasn't MacFarlane's. The hair was gray, but it was she, all right.

"Christ! . . . Morgan!" that shout!

Beside her, the boy; her son, too, he was, looking like Dog looked the day she left him to go to Leith to meet the first mate, Dog's first mate, the shipmate of many long years; to Leith, to live just out of the city; to wait for him, Morgan.

He drew a quick breath.

Every one was quiet and looking at him. Mr. Hop and the manager had heard the shout and appeared at the broken saloon-bar door, and he gazed across at them.

But there weren't two. There was one.

And that one, in a blue uniform, was sweeping towards him with blazing eyes and open lips; then a hard fist struck his mouth. It came before he knew that . . .

Two hands found his throat as his gutta-percha collar tore loudly.

Every one was shouting.

Then he threw that hissing blue body away with terrific strength, back into some tables and chairs.

An avenue was cleared for him and he knew what had happened. The rat had sprung at last!

Good! . . . Good! . . . He'd never spring again . . . after this once.

Again the packed bar yelled as another crushing blow struck Morgan's high cheek-bone, and Boy jumped back clear and balanced upon two lightning feet.

At the doors dirty forms surged, "Back, back," and outside in the rain there was the cry: "A fight! A fight!"

Up from the Robin Hood came every one, squelching through puddles, tripping, falling, floundering. "A fight! A fight!"

The rain and creaking shutters shouted: "A fight! A fight!"

Luke surged in through the saloon, battling his way to the broken glass door, which fell clattering as his elbow smashed against it.

"A fight!" Some one had knocked the police whistle from Mrs. Ross' hand.

Strong arms seized Looney Luke at the edge of the ring, an act encouraged by grandstand auditors who stood full up upon the bar.

"Take him out! Let him go! In now, little one!"

Boy sprang again, and again his body hurled back, down. His head cracked against the boot of a man who held his mother, safely, up on the window bench—the mother who knew it not, but who was strangely still and white, her mouth agape, greedily watching the stream of blood from the big man's lips which he smeared across his blue chin, as he brushed at it hurriedly because Boy rushed again.

Fury!

Boy! He saw no faces—yes, one; only one, always there. One! And below it a red throat that he must rip and tear.

His fingers opened. He screamed as he leaped, a blood-curdling scream, the scream of the dead father in its echo. Body and spirit parted in the leap to clutch frantically; hands caught that red throat again; nails tore in that vein . . . that vein . . . to rip it.

Then his legs left the floor. . . . He was swinging, around . . . around . . . around . . . then down.

A closed fist hit his head at the back, once . . . twice . . . three times.

There was a singing in his ears. His hands opened wide. Something crushed against his nose. The base of his spine hit the floor. A boot thrust terribly at his middle; a rib broke—he felt it turn in like a knife.

“No, no! No kickin’! Fair play! Down him! Down the big ’un!” The crowd was protesting for fair play.

“Get off me!” Morgan’s boot now kicked toward the protesters.

Mr. Hop’s voice in his ear said: “Captain, stand yer ground. Finish ’im!”

Yes, finish him! That was right.

Morgan, silent, white and waiting. A momentary hush. Some one started to count, just to be funny. But . . . nothing was funny.

“Shut up! Don’t touch ’im! He’ll get up! Watch ’im! There! He’s to; he’s to!”

Gray-blue . . . a distant roar . . . tap, tap, tap, tap . . . in deaf ears . . . a smell . . . funny, and

something coming down at the back of his nose, pouring down, choking.

A spluttering cough opened Boy's eyes and sprayed the sawdust red.

The opened eyes saw that gas-bracket overhead larger than the world falling down, down on him; but they did not flinch . . . and the gas-bracket did not fall . . . and then the eyes saw that face looking down at them—Morgan's, with a nose that reached to his chin, and eyes that sprang apart and met again.

A struggle to rise; but his legs were gone . . . his legs were gone . . . his legs were gone!

The face above, like the moon gone mad, spread and laughed. He was dead. Boy was dead, in hell; . . . tap, tap, tap . . . in his ears; . . . that shaft in his side . . . and swallow, swallow, swallow that burning stuff that poured down behind his nose.

One ear cleared. A million voices: "Get up! Get up!" . . . and the face growing larger, stooping down.

His legs were gone . . . his legs were gone! A scuffle he could not hear.

Two hands seized his dead face. Through one ear he heard: "Don't fight for me, sailor."

He saw another face; his mother's, wasn't it? . . . his mother's? They were pulling her off; away, and she was screaming something that he could not hear.

His legs! God give him his legs!

A roaring shout. He did not know, but he had started to rise. He was coming up, up! He stood and fell forward toward that face—Morgan's.

Then Looney Luke's voice screamed: "God!"

And a hush fell as Boy crashed down again and lay still.

Two policemen, sharply blue, cut through a struggling, dirty mass.

Every one talked; every one wondered.

Mrs. Ross sat white and mute in a chair behind the bar.

The rain beat into the policemen's faces at the held-open door as they hurled one and then another sodden form into the muddy street.

Captain Morgan, Mr. Hop and the manager walked quietly down Waterfront, a small diminishing crowd behind them.

The bar door shut tight. Kindly hands pulled Tillie gently away from the prone form of the young sailor who had fought for her, the one who was just like a little prince; and she followed quietly as they carried his limp body into the saloon bar and sat him in the horsehair chair.

His head fell forward.

Then Mrs. Ross came in with a bowl of water, pushing Tillie aside to gaze horror-stricken into the pulp that had been Boy's face.

Luke quietly drew her attention to where Boy's bleeding hand caught sharply at a place on his side, and the hand of Mrs. Ross crept tenderly under his

coat and then under his shirt and felt there while she looked up, frightened.

Tillie asked a furtive question. Mrs. Ross pushed her roughly away, and looked frantically around the little room that was rapidly filling again.

"Get a doctor, one of you! He's hurt to death."

Some one scuffled out at the door.

Tillie sank on her knees and the sound of muffled sobbing came from her.

But Boy did not hear. He could hear nothing of earth. He swirled past clouds hung high above black, angry seas. Wind shrieked and he peered down. There was no ship upon the waters; waters that he did not know; a sea of another sphere. But he could hear its laughing, taunting wash.

Sailors might be below, asleep.

Oh, but to drop and sink beneath that inky surface . . . down, down, to black oblivion . . . to silence!

Desperately he gazed up, and through a tiny patch in that black cloud came a light that burned his face, scorching his hair, burning him; then a cool breeze swept him on into clear blue and somewhere in the distance an angel's voice seemed calling. . . .

The clouds had passed and the wind and the wash were hushed.

There was nothing but blue and that voice . . . Min's voice, calling . . . in the vague distance, "Boy . . . Boy . . . Boyee!"

CHAPTER XII

MIN, also, was having her adventures during this absorbing period.

When Mrs. Ross had laid Min upon the bed the little laughing girl had seemed strangely quiet, suddenly. So she had turned the light down and left carefully to go downstairs to her work behind the bar; and her first order had been Boy's when he had asked her for that glass of double gin.

Mins don't faint and pass out, and it was only by the sheerest chance that Min had lost control; the slight chance of the cigarette-end that sets the factory ablaze and kills a hundred people.

So now she lay quiet, her eyes open, pressed against the pillow, curiously exhausted. She felt as though she had run ten miles without stopping and her heart against the bed thumped beneath her. Her leg kicked, heel up, in the air convulsively and the entire bed commenced to swing slowly from side to side, higher and higher, swifter and swifter, like the Hampstead holiday swing, until it swung her out of the room, over and over, back across Limehouse; and Ma Brent was looking up at her, waiting, but Min wasn't a bit afraid.

What did she care? The bloody bed could swing

itself to death and Ma Brent could climb up, if she'd a mind to, and do otherwise as she damn well liked.

So, of course, the bed swung back into The Thistle bedroom. Beds or any other things that swing or jump or behave absurdly in illusions will go back and stay quiet if the little person riding upon them is not afraid; and Mins are not afraid.

She peeped up over her shoulder. Yes, the blinkin' room was there all right; it would be. It had been there all the time. Yes, Min knew that.

Then, for some extraordinary reason, she started to sing right into the pillow:

“Father got the sack from the water-works,
Through smokin' his little cherry briar . . .”

And she sang right on until she came to that bit about setting the water-works on fire and then she laughed into the pillow. She always did laugh at that bit.

Then her head came up. No; she'd better be careful and not laugh. She mightn't be able to stop!

She thought steadily for a moment. Yes, she'd always be afraid to laugh again, now. She'd be afraid she wouldn't be able to stop. Blimey, that was a funny one!

She recalled a sailor who used to sing a laughing song when he got drunk and once he'd run away with himself. How she'd laughed at him! They all had. And Min started laughing again, and

again she couldn't stop, so she stuffed the sheet into her mouth. It made her retch, but finally it stopped her laughing; then again that feeling of terrible exhaustion.

She sighed heavily and her hand gripped something very soft—the pink nightdress. Boy would never see that now! Poor boy—what he'd missed! He could have seen that nightdress with Min in it! What a silly boy he was! He'd sooner get drunk and kill somebody, and sit down with that old, old tot . . . and then she remembered his smile at that old tot—his smile that belonged to her!

Eve woke within her. That was her smile, her own. And . . . her smile to go to that dirty, frowsy old creature.

She sat up. Boy, blimey, Boy with that!

But from somewhere Pinkie's voice came to her:

"You're on the threshold of Life's sweetest journey. Stick to your man. He's yours. God gave him to you."

Yes, he was hers, hers, hers! And no dirty old sailors' tot was going to take him away from her!

She felt suddenly weary. Heigho, she'd rest a bit, first. You don't have to be in a mad temper when you've got to manage those dirty, hateful, rotten old sailors' tots!

Her head fell back upon the bed. Yes; that was right. Any kind of girl goes down into a bar and rants and fights for a man. Other kinds of girls

did that; and if she did that she'd look like one of those other kinds of girls. No, there was another way. What?

She lay silently, her mind seizing upon this, upon that, discarding each new idea with a heavy sigh.

Inspiration! A note—a note! Yes, she'd send a note down to Mrs. Ross to give to him! Oh, she could write! She used to make out a list of groceries and things every day for Ma Brent.

She'd have to send a note because she couldn't trust herself to say what she wanted to in front of that dirty old tot. A note, that was it!

As she scrambled up, a sound came up from the street below. She heard some one shouting: "A fight! A fight!" and some glass smashed.

Go on, blast 'em all! Let 'em fight it out! Let 'em fight!—it wasn't nothing to do with her, was it? She'd mind her own concern; and she had a concern now, all right: first to find a bit of pencil and then some paper . . . and that was concern enough.

There you are; whenever you want something ye never can find it, now, can ye?

Hooray! Pen and ink! Yes! This was a hotel, wasn't it?

She did not know that once upon a time Angus Ross, who was always fussy about that hotel side of his business, had asked Mrs. Ross always to see to the pen and ink and paper and towels in Numbers 1 and 2, as he had always proudly called the

only two letting rooms in the house, and Mrs. Ross had always carried out Angus' wishes.

And so the pen, who had heard Mrs. Ross tell all this to that one last boarder, four years ago, thrilled as it was caught up in these light, trembling fingers.

Pens have such good memories, such sweet natures, and such emotional moments! And this pen was a plaid one, "The Gordon plaid," Mrs. Ross had remarked when her late husband had brought it home with two others. This pen now supposed the other two had been lost or worn out, but it thrilled and knew that it lived now because directed by Min's fingers it dived into the cool, blue ink and made some preliminary marks.

Neither Min nor the plaid pen heard through their mutual adventure the crashes and shouts below. A pen is a sweet, silent, distracting companion and adventures are so possible with one; this was this pen's adventure with Min, as the pen itself related it upon the sheet of paper there and then provided:

"Dere Boy, I hop you are quite well. . . ."

At this point a lot of fun was enjoyed because reams of paper were destroyed, and pens love beginning things; sometimes they tire towards the finish.

". . . I want to speak to you about sumthink. . . . Yur mine whatever you may say. . . . I

ain't agoing rong as I sed becaus it ain't rite to do rong with a thing that ain't yur own is it? And I ain't mine becaus I'm yurs and I want to giv you back sumthink thats yurs just as if you mite have dropt it like. I remane

Yurs truly,

MIN."

A long, arduous fight, this, of sighs and worryings. The pen had watched amusedly the little red tongue above poking out hither and thither . . . a kindly, lonely old pen this, who loved youth and who seemed to understand; it was a pen that knew its strength; a pen that was conscious of the tradition of its Gordon plaid; a pen that knew with pride that it was mightier than the sword.

It had laughed softly to itself, the ink drying on its lips as it heard that little human being run downstairs. It felt hot and was still conscious of her damp grip upon its slender body.

It had also heard her startled cry from below and wondered. Pens never hear their answers.

Entering the saloon, with her letter in her hand, Min had screamed on seeing whom they were bending over in the chair. All restraint gone, she had rushed forward and slung that dirty old tot away, savagely. Even when the old woman was upon the floor she threatened her. Somehow she'd immediately associated this grotesque, sobbing old bag of rags with . . .

She held Boy's head up, her hot hand upon his forehead. It was then that Boy had sensed that

light above him and that scorching burn upon his head. It was then that he had drifted into peaceful blue and his ears had caught that angel's voice calling . . . calling . . . "Boy . . . Boy . . . Boyee!"

His eyes opened . . . Min . . .

CHAPTER XIII

WITH the hot, nervous stride of a summer's day upon its way to its inevitable dawn, so Boy's senses advanced upon his night . . . fragment by fragment the puzzle was pieced together from the kilt of brave Angus upon the wall to the white little face of Min looking up at him. Noises became voices and blotches became faces.

Glancing down upon himself he knew he had a body, an aching thing, hanging suspended in mid-air upon a bayonet thrust into its side.

His hand came up and touched a mountain of flesh near one of his eyes. He did not know which one.

And then with a vague tick . . . tick . . . tick . . . a flywheel in his brain functioned, and thoughts leaped pell-mell through the door outside of which they had been patiently waiting. The first thought to get in asked "Mother?" and obedient eyes searched like silent, well-trained servants of the mind, and quickly found a little figure, huddled, looking at him from the corner.

His vast, swollen upper-lip stretched; the skin broke asunder as he smiled, and the hand that Min did not hold stretched out to the little figure that took a step forward. Min's head turned:

"Get back there, you! He's mine! Get out before . . ."

And Boy's hand pulled suddenly away from hers.

Lamey, Red and about three others from *The Spray* stood around, talking in low voices.

Mrs. Ross was speaking to a policeman with his helmet off, who was writing in a book, a glass of beer upon the table at his side.

Two others, not of *The Spray*, had gone for the doctor.

Luke had followed them as they had rushed out.

Now there was a hush as Boy made a sound. Both arms came out to old Tillie who was moving slowly to him, her eyes upon his face.

And suddenly Min screamed, "Get back, or I'll brain yer. 'E's mine! 'E's mine!"

Tillie faltered; she did not speak. She just stood there, her eyes on Boy's broken face.

Boy rose, haltingly. He swayed and then stood straight.

Min caught his arm.

His hand came out. She took it; but his eyes were upon the little gray figure who now stood within a foot of him, looking up. She seemed in a trance. Why didn't some one say something?

Boy swayed.

A voice rang out; Tillie's voice: "Who is this man? Who? Who? Christ, take his eyes away! Who is he? Who?"

Lamey caught her arm. She'd gone off her chump, for a cert!

"Who is he? Who is he?"

Boy's mouth moved, but only a husky sound came.

It was Min's voice that answered, loud and shrill: "If ye want to know, 'e's Boy Leyton, an' 'e's mine! 'E's mine!" And she left Boy's side and advanced threateningly.

Boy made a tragic effort and then fell suddenly back into the chair, but no one seemed to notice him.

Two women faced each other. Another fight? . . . No!

Mrs. Ross and the policeman swept forward. The men edged round.

"Boy Leyton!"

The little gray figure caught Red's arm that still held her.

"Dog Leyton's boy?"

"That's it." Red's voice was not excited; it never was.

Min advanced a step. "And what about it?"

A sudden cry; a scramble. Min and men were brushed aside like feathers. Have you ever known a mother's strength? A gray head hid Boy's face, and a voice was heard to say: "Mine! . . . My own!"

A silence fell. Even Min did not move. The lights seemed somehow brighter. Holy spirits seemed to be there in the room. They watched in silence as Boy's lips moved and he said, "Mother!" Everybody heard him.

Vividly Min recalled Boy's story told that very day in that very room. Yes, the mother he was to find, and here she was!

Boy's mother; the mother he had always told her he wondered about. They had played mothers once, each making up out of their minds just what they thought each of their mothers must be like; hers and his, and now . . .

A rough voice outside—Mr. Hop's—: "All hands *The Lady Spray!* Come on!" An answering movement in the room. Some one repeated: "All hands *The Lady Spray!*"

And Boy heard and rose, suddenly, to his feet.

His little mother rose with him, Min mutely watching them. He smiled and brought his two arms together. His mother in one and the other that which he had stretched out for Min and she in it.

They met awkwardly, silently . . . Mother and Min.

Then Boy's hand found his pocket and as he stepped forward, his purse dropped to the floor, because the effort and the pain of his rib had nearly overbalanced him. Red caught his arm.

Min spoke: "Yer not goin'?"

Mrs. Ross barred his way as he moved toward the door. "No, no; he can't! He can't go!"

Even Red said: "Ye'd better jump ship, Boy."

Boy laughed. It was rather an awful laugh; and with a stumbling effort, he pulled his mother and Min together and pointed down at the purse

upon the floor which he could in no wise have picked up.

"Wait . . . for me . . . see? . . . Both . . ."

Then towards the door, almost falling.

The three women and Red surged forward to stop him. Luke arrived with the doctor to bar his way. Red held his arm.

Seeing Luke Boy's hands went out. "Take me, Luke."

Luke came and took his arm immediately. "Here's the doctor, Boy."

Boy's voice rang out: "Doctor?—hell!"

He paused and swayed there in Luke's grip and turned with a swinging gesture to the room wherein Min held his mother, whose eyes had closed.

"Wait fer me . . . London, see?"

He fell out of the room between Luke and Red.

Mrs. Ross and Min laid Tillie down and the doctor stepped forward to them.

Outside in the rain Red and Luke spoke at once to the sagging form that hung between them and what they said caused the sagging form to straighten convulsively.

"Take me aboard, blast ye! I'm mate! Obey, will ye? Come on!"

Luke's voice: "But ye're mad—mad!"

"Mad? Hell! Come on!"

And they moved slowly on and down.

The world smiled . . . just a drunken sailor
sagging between two mates.

A drunken sailor, yes . . . but drunk with . . .
fury!

CHAPTER XIV

SOMEWHERE near the waterfront a church bell struck nine and somewhere near the waterfront, in a little back room, somewhere, the snoring form of some one turned upon a twisted ugly bed. Then the form rose, clad only in a flannel shirt.

"Where are ye?"

Wet wind through a piece of brown paper stuck over a hole in the window flickered the worn mantel of the incandescent light sillily.

"Where are ye?"

A motor horn in the vague distance answered mockingly.

An awful oath rang in the little room, and Clancey half fell towards the light to pull the string and in the increased illumination gazed around blinkingly.

His hand went to his sweating, throbbing temples.

What time was it? and where had she gone to? He was alone.

Let's see, yes, he was in Leith, but where?

He fell over the washbowl which sat flatly upon the floor.

He swore again. She'd done a bunk on him! She had and all! What time was it?

Some one was going by the door. He crossed and opened it an inch. The passer was a tall man with a lighted match in his hand.

"What time is it, mate?"

"Nine o'clock," a heavy voice boomed at him.

Clancey slammed the door. The wind helped him and an absurd valentine card fell from the wall.

Nine o'clock! Blast! *The Spray* was out; gone; cleared! Here was a nice kettle of fish!

A pint bottle showed three inches yellow up from the bottom. Good! His lips closed greedily round the neck. Ah, . . . good!

Clancey slapped his chest. That was an eye-opener! Now he'd get out and get a bite to eat. The whiskey burned.

Where had she gone? that girl? There was the peg she'd hung the certain kind of tam-o'-shanter on. Pretty hair she had.

So she'd 'opped it, 'ad she? They 'ad no conscience, they 'adn't. She didn't live here; no; she'd said that. He'd had to tread quietly up those creaking stairs.

He hiccoughed. The whiskey burned; and he sat down on the bed. Where was this place? Near the water, anyway, for there was a siren. So *The Lady Spray* was out? Well, what about another sleep? Where'd that girl gone?

Look, look! What was that? That, under there! Ugh! Only his boot. No; he'd better get out; it would be cooler. He was burning up.

It had been a good bust, but it had ended too soon.

Where'd she gone, that girl?

He wandered around. What was he looking for? Where had she gone? What was he looking for? He had forgotten. Ah . . . his trousers, that was it! Where were they? No; not there. But that was where he had put them—on that chair.

Blimey! His money was in them!

He suddenly woke fully and searched and knocked things down and tripped over the wash-bowl again . . . twice; he looked under the dirty bed and on the dirty bed that hadn't any sheets.

She'd bunked with them!

The dirty skirt! She'd hopped it with his brass and his trousers, so that he couldn't chase her! And he'd missed *The Spray*.

What was he going to do now? He sat very still. What dirty, rotten, stinking things women were! And he'd cottoned up to this one, too! She'd told him about her kid and he'd given her half a crown to send him in a postal order. Now she'd gone and done him down!

He reached forward for the bottle. Hell, it was empty! In his rage he threw it from him, out through the window, smashing the glass. He'd get out and find her, the dirty . . .

A shout from below.

He crossed and looked out of the window. Some

men and a woman were looking up and as his head came out, there was another shout.

"What's up?" he called.

"Come down here," some one answered.

"I can't!" he laughed.

"Come down!" several shouted.

Then something whispered that something was wrong, and he withdrew his head. What was up? What was up? What's it about?

A thumping on the stairs; hammering at the door; a woman's voice screaming; the door flew open and a heavy man stood there, and a fat woman behind him.

Without warning or sound the heavy man rushed in and smashed and Clancey fell. A policeman came in.

"Who is he?"

Then the fat woman spoke: "Dunno. 'Ee ain't no right in this 'ouse. I'm the landlady."

"Get out in the 'all, ma'am; he ain't dressed." And the policeman and heavy man watched Clancey stagger up.

Before he could speak, the policeman seized him. "Where's yer trooserrrs?"

"Dunno. What's up? What's it about?"

Without a word, the heavy man hit him again and Clancey charged and kicked.

The police whistle screamed. The whiskey burned and Clancey went mad and ran down into the street, terror in his eyes.

What was it all about? Get out! Smash! and he caught some one in the face as he ran.

A rising cry came up. "Madman! Madman!"

A way cleared for him as he ran through the rain in his shirt, the crowd after him. A policeman's truncheon felled him. He scrambled up and fought and bit and kicked until the truncheon crashed again, terribly.

"What's up? What's up? Who is he?" and the police sergeant, whose truncheon had stopped the flight, threw his cape over the prostrate form which was probably dead, and pushed back the crowd from the doorway.

Then the other policeman and the heavy man came up on the run.

"Did ye get him?"

The sergeant answered with a question, which the policeman answered: "They was comin' up from market."

The sergeant interrupted: "Who?"

"This mon and his Missus with their bairn." The policeman indicated the heavy man. "And the looney was hidin' there up in Number fourteen, where I found him without his clothes, up at Mrs. Reid's, and he threw a bottle from the window and cut the baby's head open."

"Where's the baby?"

"Off at the doctor's."

The crowd surged forward. A sailor gone mad had brained a baby! Forward and back it surged. The news spread to The Robin Hood across the

way and men and women stumbled across through the rain. A naked, mad sailor had brained a baby! The girl in the certain kind of tam-o'-shanter touched the arm of the girl who was with her and shivered.

"There 'e is! Look, 'e's dead!"

A voice at her side volunteered: "He was mad and they killed him."

"Good job, too," remarked the girl under the certain kind of tam-o'-shanter. "Fancy killin' a little baby!" She turned away, horrified.

From a pair of naked, hairy, wet legs, peeping from under a policeman's cape, with a thin streak of red, trickling down to the gutter, mingling unwillingly with the rain.

So "a gal or two" turned away from a tragic sight.

"'Ave a good time," Clancey had said. "Tell the world to go an' choke itself. . . . I've seen a bit o' life in my time! . . . Take a tip from yer Uncle Clan."

. . . the world to choke itself! . . . Ha, ha! He had called the world and the world had answered with a lightning thrust.

Choke it, would you, little man? . . . Fury!

CHAPTER XV

ANOTHER bedroom; a tiny, ordered, proper little room, smelling sweet and dusted clean, fragrant and with fresh curtains and clean, white walls because Mrs. Ross had promised dear Angus it always should be so.

And now, pink and white, Min, alone, was very busy, hurrying to do something. One after another she folded garments that looked dirty and out of keeping with other things in the room. But Min shook and folded them tenderly.

Then she crossed to the door and listened. Some one was in the bathroom. She could hear the sound of running water. There was a moment yet. She swept back into the room, the pink folds of her nightdress clinging round her figure prettily.

Crossing to the bed, she smoothed and patted the pillows. The rose-glass stood at the side, but the roses were gone; but never mind, she'd leave the glass. The roses had been there just the same, and roses didn't die if you've seen them. That is, those you kept back of your eyes didn't.

Min was strangely calm and she swept about the room doing odd, significant things, with a grace that belonged rather to a sweeping, pink beauty of another day.

She hesitated and then drew from a new brown bag a nightdress of flannelette. It rested against her face. Yes, it was aired, all right.

Spreading it upon the bed, she stood up and pulled one of her arms out of the gown of wedding pink, the new, soft one.

A furtive glance at the door, and she let the gown fall, shimmering to her feet, and stood for an instant naked . . . pink and white.

Then she put her little arms into the flannelette and stood up so that it fell and covered her. Something beautifully suggestive of God's perfection fluttered for a moment before our eyes . . . a woman—a young woman.

Her face had never glowed like this before, composed and beautiful. Perhaps because she had longed for this night; perhaps, but . . .

Why had she changed that nightdress? She had had some good reason. She must have had, she had done it so deliberately.

She waited at the door, glancing around the room furtively to see that all was in readiness.

She heard the bathroom door open and some one coming forward. She stood aside as Mrs. Ross came in, her arm about the shoulders of a little some one wrapped in a blanket, some one with gray hair falling down. Min took the other arm.

"I left her a nightdress on the bed, ma'am. Will ye 'elp her." Averting her head sweetly she busied herself with something in the new brown bag until she heard Mrs. Ross say, "There ye are now. Kick

those slippers off. That's right. Now down into bed."

Min stood and watched the gray hair sink gently upon the soft, white pillow and, moving around to the other side of the bed, she stood as though she wanted to help.

Some one called Mrs. Ross from downstairs.

"I can manage now, ma'am. Thanks," Min murmured.

"Good-night, then. Ring if ye want anything," and Mrs. Ross left.

"Good night," said Min, "and thank ye."

She stood for a moment nervously still. She had begged Mrs. Ross for this; but now she felt afraid.

The gray head upon the pillow, the face averted, was so still, and tiny beads of perspiration stood out upon the bit of wrinkled forehead that she could see. The hot bath had caused that. The head moved and a face looked around at her and held for a moment, drifting gently into a smile.

Min's fear left her. She stretched over across the bed and put her arms around that neck, pillow and all, and whispered: "Are ye all right . . . Mother?"

Min's little lips kissed Boy's mother's cheek and held there. "Ye told me to call ye 'Mother.' Do ye still mind, Mother?"

The other woman's voice was firm. Life sprang into it with a thrill of tenderness and love.

A graceful ship, tossed and battered in a hopeless storm of awful years, lay to suddenly in calm

waters, and raised her breathless prow gracefully, proudly, in the storm's hushed lull.

Good salvage! A ship to sail again! Almost trim! A worthy ship, as good as any ship afloat!

"You dear, sweet lamb, kiss me . . . little girl . . . hold me tight!"

Thin arms came up in thin, pink sleeves and drew Min in the flannelette close. Neither could speak, because both were weeping, and Min's arm, the one with the pins and needles in it, lifted and she hopped up and turned out the light, opened the window a little way, and tiptoed back to the bed.

Then she stepped in and drew the clean, cool bedclothes about them both and her arm went round the thin waist beside her. She could feel the thump, thump of a beating heart beneath her hand. A gentle voice kissed her ears:

"God bless you!"

Silence. And then Min said: "God bless our Boy." The other's entire body turned, trembling.

"I was a-thinkin' that, then. God bless our Boy. Our own Boy."

After all, they were women, weren't they?

And so they commenced to chat very quietly of Boy, murmuring endless, wonderful whispers of their Boy, pulsating with hope. Of course, all would be well. How could it be otherwise? He was their Boy, wasn't he?

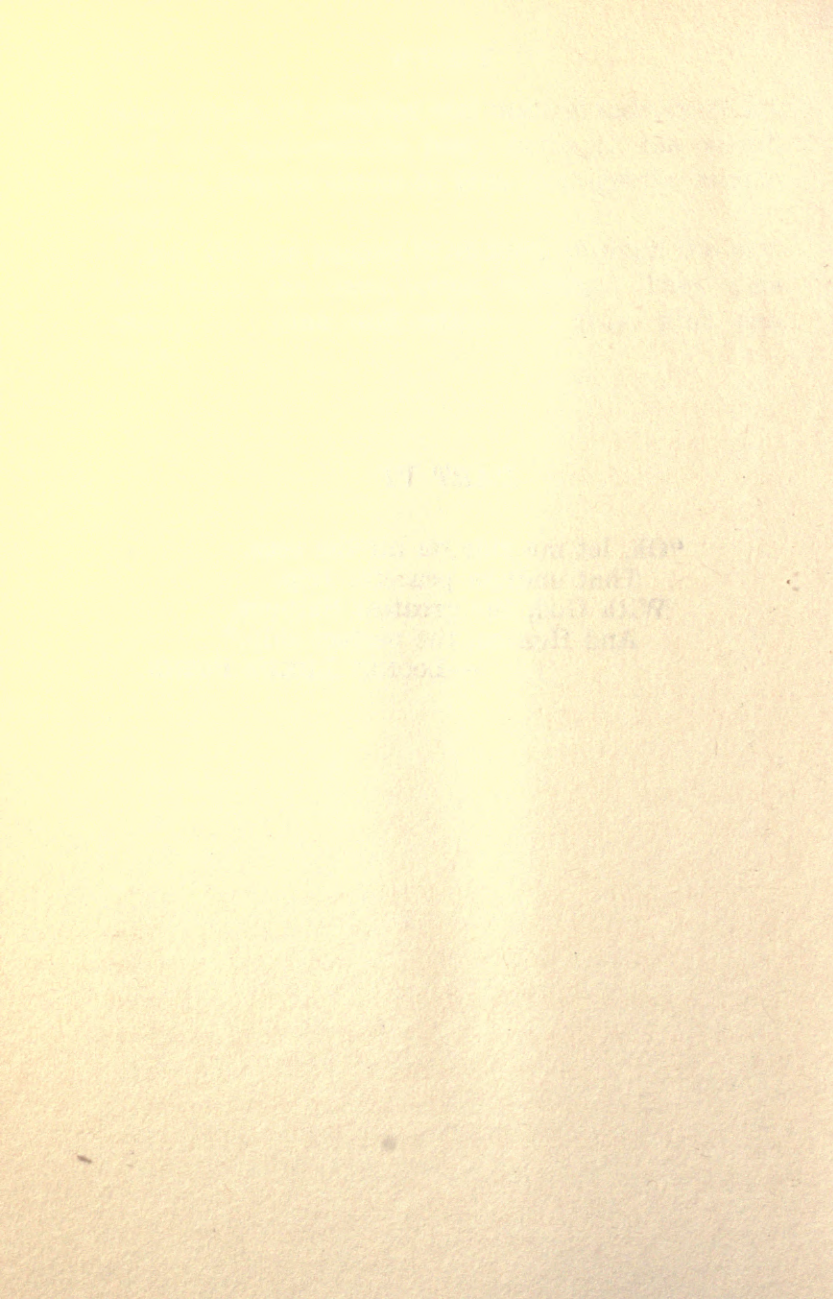
Neither had knelt to pray, because neither ever had. They did not know that way; but God gets

many kinds of prayers and understands them all, and He understands best, perhaps, the silent, hopeful prayers direct to Him from gentle, human souls.

And the sun peeped in at them through the window when the dawn came, smiling. They were asleep . . . pink and white . . . gray, pink and white.

PART VI

"Oh, let me ride on all the seas,
That endless peaceful trip,
With God, the greatest Skipper,
And Heaven, the perfect ship."
—LOONEY LUKE'S POEMS



CHAPTER I

R'ANK on rank advancing . . . to where?
 . . . Rollers . . . ominous proceeding ranks
 of green . . . captained by screaming
 ghosts mounted on the wind, charging, charging,
 their war chant hissing to the dull, thundering
 tread of their distant feet, tramping fathoms below.

So the North Sea ever charges on its phantom
 enemy, its countless white arms rearing hungrily
 up, leaping into the air, searching . . . for what?

The Lady Spray, agile and schooled, tripped
 lightly over and on, shaking her graceful body as
 might some tall white hound upon Siberian snows.

But there was a shrug of irritability in her move-
 ments. Like a circus lady who hastens her dan-
 gerous act to rush home to her sick baby, her
 splendid movements are marked and her smile is
 not there.

How could it be? Did *The Spray* not sense the
 change within her? She sighed continually. She
 might have been a petted race horse sold to alien
 hands, as she gazed out upon a vista of change and
 misery, down, down upon her declining years, until
 her faithful timbers should yield to the breaker's
 ax, the storm-hidden rocks, those nightmares of
 all ships, or to whatever death the God of ships
 decreed.

Poor *Spray*! Poor *Lady Spray*!

Morning; every element at large; sea, wind and sun; sun, wind and sea. A morning to shout, sing, scrub, polish and tattle; a sailor's morning; a morning for the chanty man who was not there.

No, Clancey's voice was missing.

But Red was humming a bit up forward and Zeis could be heard in the galley. But whoever understood the words he sang?

His song, or whatever it was, stopped as he handed out a can of soup and some biscuits to Looney Luke who waited quietly at the galley door.

"Tatas en feeche en bones—vary goot fer't stren'th."

Luke thought it smelt so and, smiling, walked forward.

Lamey sniffed and smiled as Luke passed.

"Better, is 'e?"

Luke paused. "Improving."

Lamey stopped to jam a new quid into his cheek and then he spat properly.

"I 'eard 'im all night. Ravin', wasn't 'e?"

Luke nodded. "Poor mind's troubled, Lamey."

Lamey turned again to his job. "'Ard luck!"

Luke went on happily; happy because Lamey was not the only hand by many that had asked tenderly about his battered, suffering charge. Yes, the crew were for Boy to a man. He was of the deep sea, Boy was—they all knew that. He had salt and he could go. Blimey, he could go for a little'n!

And this dull admiration effected a reaction against the tall, silent, new skipper. Er—he was a superior cuss, he was! You never knew what was in his head and you might be a lump of garbage, the way he talked to yer.

Luke glanced up through the swift breeze that smelt so good, so fresh.

Somehow he felt that all was well. Luke was himself again this morning. For forty-eight hours since leaving Leith he had been strangely enclosed in a stifling doubt, but this morning everything whispered; the sea, the wind, the world whispered: "All's well! All's well! Only you . . . only men . . . can be otherwise! All's well! Men, too, may be well if they but will it so!"

Morgan's voice nearby arrested him. He paused by Boat Number 2 and listened. Mr. Hop's voice was answering:

"Latitude — Longitude —"

Silence for a moment, and then Morgan's voice again.

"Right over the old 'un! Funny!"

He walked out just in front of Luke and spat over the side.

"I reckon 'e misses 'is swig of rum, down there." Then he apostrophized the dead insultingly, ribaldly. "Don't yer, Dog? 'Avin a few fits about it, are yer?"

He grinned as he stood looking over.

Mr. Hop passed and stood beside him.

The wind swept their voices away.

So they were over Dog Leyton's grave! They were!

Luke, too, was thinking quickly of it, as he hurried forward. Yes, they were over the old 'un's grave. Strange. Mechanically he made his way into the fo'c'sle.

Something stretched upon Clancey's bunk turned as he entered and started up suddenly.

"What—what . . . who is it?"

"Just me, Boy, with some soup. Good, too! Zeis made it special for yer."

"Ugh! Don't want it!"

"Do try, Boy. Just fer Luke! Come on; just a drop. 'Ere . . . smell!"

"Take the blinkin' stuff away, will yer?"

"But, Boy, you want to get strong, don't you? Didn't you pray last night with me? You got to do something on your own for it."

"Ahr! You an' yer prayers an' yer soup an' yer talk! What good will they do anybody? Lemme alone!"

The sunlight swept suddenly through the port across Boy's face—dark blue, white and red; one eye completely closed and the nose swollen grotesquely; a purple billow of flesh hiding the line of the mouth.

So he had lain hour after hour in that rumbling, stinking hole, listening to the incessant wash—that damned, awful, taunting wash.

"You've got it to do . . . you've got it to do . . . you've got it to do!"

He had listened until he'd screamed and tried to struggle up; but the rib and the loss of blood had robbed him of any legs to speak of.

And so now he tossed under the blanket that was clean only because Looney Luke had washed it for him, all day, all night, all night, all day; his spirit whipping up a body that lay tired and panting, unable to obey that damned, awful, taunting wash that sometimes changed to:

"Get up and kill . . . get up and kill . . . get up and kill!"

Then he'd press the blanket over his ears, but still it would cut through relentlessly, deep into his ear drums—that infernal, terrible, incessant wash! "You've got it to do . . . you've got it to do!" until . . .

Once he had screamed and rushed for the hatch to jump out clear and end it all, but Luke and Red had caught him, weak and easy to lay back on the bed.

And then those two damn, dirty conspirators, Luke and Red, had talked low and shaken their heads, until he'd thrown the cup at Luke's bald head and Luke had come fearlessly to the bunk and knelt and gabbed about being calm.

Who could be calm while that damn, awful, taunting wash kept on laughing at him: "You've got it to do! . . . Get up and kill!"

So hour after hour he'd groaned and tossed and the hands had come and peered over him, shaking their heads gloatingly.

And then, once, in the distance, he'd heard Morgan's voice. Morgan! Christ in Heaven, Morgan! He'd leaped up, but then had fallen and shaken that rib until he'd seen gray and blue and red . . . and his Mother and Min fighting, tearing at each other's hair and eyes . . . and Min had got his little Mother down and was pouring straight gin out of a bottle into her blue eyes, just so that she wouldn't ever see him again . . . and then both the women had looked up, because they saw Morgan coming towards them . . . and he'd just looked and grinned and turned away; and they both had turned and followed him . . . and Min was throwing some roses that she wore over his head—

Boy had opened his eyes to see Morgan's back at the door. He had shouted and Morgan had turned and laughed. And then Luke had come and whispered:

"He ain't gonna touch yer, Boy; don't get scared."

Scared! Him! Boy! Scared?

Again he'd hit Luke with his hand and Luke in answer had prayed aloud and Boy had listened until Luke said:

"Father, give him strength!"

And Boy had cried out:

"Strength! Strength! Strength!"

And the wash had laughed at his voice.

And the wash was right because no strength had come all night or even now.

And here was Luke and smelly soup; and the

sun was outside, and other men were able to walk about; and the wash still laughed at him, and he couldn't get up . . . he couldn't get up . . . he couldn't get up and kill and rip that dirty swine that had looked over him and laughed!

Luke sat quietly, watching Boy's twitching face.

"Where do you think we are now, Boy?"

A groan answered him.

"Where are we now, Boy?"

"Hell!"

"Is your father in Hell, then, Boy?"

"Hell!"

"Boy!" Luke's voice rang out. "Oh, take heart, Boy . . . look!"

What was Luke shouting about now? Boy looked up. Luke continued, with a splendid gesture:

"Out of that there port, you can see your father's grave. We're over him now, Boy."

"Liar!"

Luke was silent.

But Luke never lied. Never.

Boy spoke: "Straight?"

Luke nodded his head slowly.

Boy was silent.

So his father lay below . . . his father!

His vision cleared. Below . . . him now!

"I loved yer all the time, Boy!"

Oh, God in heaven, his father lay below!

Then the wash spoke: "He's watching below!"

. . . He's watching below! . . . He's watching below!"

Luke did not attempt to stop the twisted figure that staggered to the door. He knew that something bigger than either of them willed it should be so, that some impulse bigger than either of them led Boy forward.

He did not follow, but stood mutely waiting.

If Boy jumped over, down to his father, then God had willed it so.

A light shining in those eyes that had just left had ordered him and all men . . . not to interfere. Yet Boy had said no word.

He had passed out silently, on and out.

Mr. Hop touched Captain Morgan's arm and pointed forward.

Together they watched the figure, naked to the waist, clutch at the house for support, and almost fall towards the ship's side, the side that was awash. Morgan smiled.

"There you are. Over 'e goes."

Mr. Hop shaded his eyes to watch. Red passed on the run; Boy was jumping over for sure!

"Get back there."

The voice of his Captain halted Red.

"That ain't no concern of yours! Get back!"

Red hesitated. Lamey and Tucker came up and stood by Red. They mumbled quickly. Mr. Hop walked forward to them.

"Get back!"

Lamey turned away still mumbling. Red and Tucker stood still, looking off.

"A mate's a mate, ain't 'e?"

Morgan had walked forward to where, a few feet from him, Boy gripped the rail. He was shouting something.

Mad! Chains! thought Morgan.

A wave broke over, and Morgan stepped back, away from the water that combed over. Luke appeared at the companionway hatch and was moving quickly out, only to be swung savagely back by the Captain.

"Get back!"

Boy, dripping, flung out his hands and the wind swept his voice back:

"Father, help me! Father! I ain't failed yer! father. . . . Gimmie strength! It's Boy a-callin' yer . . . father! I'm 'urt an' I ain't got no strength . . . but I found 'im, father . . . an' I can't . . . I can't—"

Another wave broke and tugged his bruised body against the rail as it rushed away.

Far at sea, long rollers, line on line, swept on, interminable proceeding ranks of green.

"Father . . . strength!"

Morgan laughed.

Boy turned, stood straight up, brine dripping from his matted hair, brine glistening upon two shoulders that squared.

A scream above the wind.

"Come on, Hell—"

And Morgan swung suddenly around as a list of the ship synchronized with a crashing blow upon his ear.

His cap fell off and rolled out.

Mr. Hop ran down and Red grabbed his arm.

It was on . . . it was on . . . it was on again!

Tucker, Zeis and Lamey, even Luke, barred the passage to that small arena, bounded upon the other side by a rail that strained as two bodies flung against it in a fight of death.

But surely the death of only one . . . the little one . . . the sick one . . . because Morgan had his adversary by the throat and the back of the neck, and with awful strength was tugging, straining, drawing that clinging frame away . . . inch by inch . . . step by step . . . gasp by gasp towards the garbage chute . . . which was open.

Then Boy's wet, slippery head leaped free, and the other swung violently against the rail at the sudden breaking of his grip.

Crash! Every atom of Boy's fading strength leaped into a blow that swung Morgan square again and back for a moment. Then those large, long, ruthless arms swung out . . .

Mr. Hop struggled and blew his whistle. A futile, futile squeak.

Har . . . har-r-r-r-r . . . har!

With a roaring burst the sea laughed and deluged them all.

No one had seen, they had been too engrossed—no one had seen one stern and solid wave rise from

among its fellows, roaring, terrible with rage . . . white arms reaching, and . . .

But now they saw its million heels tearing past . . . and Boy clinging to the broken rail.

A breathless wait; none dared move forward. Then the water cleared away and Boy moved from the rail into the area of open deck.

Every one was shouting, pointing to something sweeping out, away in the white arms of the waves.

And then the wave, with its prey, sank into the sea and left, where had been a water-mountain, an empty, glistening, satisfied, water-valley.

"A boat! Lay to!"

It was Mr. Hop's voice.

Wind . . . sea . . . men! The world laughed.

Boy alone pointed out to a scrap of black, like driftwood that had appeared again . . . but sweeping back, down . . . where?

Boy's voice: "Father!"

His hands went up in a mad ecstasy; he was a glorious figure. The sun of triumph was upon his face.

Then Mr. Hop released and rushed, but strong arms seized him and the voice of a sea captain rang out:

"Arrest him!"

Of course they obeyed. Boy Leyton had been first mate, so he was Captain now, wasn't he?

"Aye, aye! Aye, aye!"

The sea answered. "Aye, aye! . . . Aye, aye!"

Then Boy stood still and looked up to the smil-

ing sky where lived Luke's God. What thought was carried on that smile, what said that smile . . . who knows but . . . God? Who knows?

And Looney Luke who stood beside him cried out in a loud voice that every one could hear:

"Captain, steer your course ahead . . . your Father spoke . . . there are no dead!"

Boy's arm swept around Luke's shoulder; their cheeks almost touched; they were both looking up . . . up . . .

"Well done!" sang the wash below. "Well done! Well done! Well done!"

CHAPTER II

"Now life what's just a ferry,
'Twixt Mother's arms and Christ,
Is painted new and merry,
'Cause Min and Boy got spliced."

AND that was only one of the things that Looney Luke wrote about it.

It happened on a Sunday, the Sunday after the Friday that Captain Boy Leyton was discharged from the hospital, where he'd been for an operation on his nose which would always have a bit of a twist in it that Min thinks is an improvement. And that rib also that Mr. Hop had set all wrong, and which Min said didn't need to come out because Boy's Eve was already made—and she was it—had been fixed, too.

Yes, it was the Sunday after the Saturday that Boy—we'll always call him that, even if he gets to be a blinking Admiral, which isn't likely, because *The Lady Spray* will live us all out by the shape of her—well, it was the Sunday after the Saturday that Boy went to the office where he'd got a big cigar, a slap on the back and his master's papers.

The Sunday had grown; by a series of excellent happenings life had risen to a crest this Sunday.

The early hours were passed by Min and Mum-

mie, as every one now called Boy's little gray mother, in their diggings in Poole Street, in getting dressed.

On board *The Spray* Zeis and the fat woman cook from The Jolly Sailors were having the time of their lives in the preparation of a feast.

Boy was busy sprucing up and spent a lot of time refusing to accept from Luke the loan of a top hat which the latter had dug up from Lord knows where. A lot of people stood round on Noak's Wharf, because the two taxis and the brake, which had been ordered an hour too early, attracted, naturally, a great deal of attention.

Red had cut himself while shaving and was going to vent himself on little Tucker, when Lamey reminded him of the rule posted upon the hatch, which said:

"No scrapping to-day, please."

A sensation . . . a happening which almost stopped the day . . . when Mr. Brisley's cellarman rolled down a whole keg of real old Burton; and then to cap that off, Mr. Petwee came down, and, after calling the Captain, who called the crew out, presented him with a gold watch on behalf of the Company.

Well, before this, of course, down had come Min and Mummie followed by a thousand kids in their Sunday clothes. It must have been Min's hat what done it.

It was large enough for ten Mins and a couple of ships thrown in.

But never mind. The taxis were wound up, the driver that wasn't drunk winding up the one belonging to the other one that was.

Boy and Mummie got into one, which was proper; and Min got into the other with Mr. Petwee who was to give her away.

Red said it was about the only time he'd ever given anything away.

Mr. Brisley, then, climbed into the taxi with Boy and Mummie, because Luke told him to, as he was best man. Don't forget that that post had been offered to each and every one of the crew, but all thought that Mr. Brisley was better dressed for it, and, then again, didn't he know what to do?

Lamey had his cornet all shined up with Globe Polish, and got up in front on the brake, and the rest of the crew got in behind.

Zeis wasn't dressed properly, but it didn't matter, because he had to go to work right away, after, back in the galley, and the fat woman cook had only consented to mind things at the last minute.

As everything moved off from moorings, Lamey started the Wedding March on his cornet, too high. He'd practiced it enough, but musicians are nervous, and Red was eating an orange, on purpose, to be funny.

Then the horses didn't cotton to the sound—and who wants a blinking wreck on your Captain's wedding day?

So off they sailed.

Luke said he'd walk up. Queer fish, Luke!

People waved up Poole Street and Min got her hat caught when she put her head out of the taxi too far to shout at some one.

The crew sang "Roses of Pickaney," and then gave "I Must Go Home To-night," the verse of which, sung as a solo by Tucker, referred to a marriage; so you see the chorus fitted, as Luke would say, aptly.

The sack of rice which Zeis had nearly forgotten and had swung on the back at the last minute, burst open as they turned into the East India Dock Road, so somebody got a free rice pudding. A bit dirty, but what ho!

At the church this was the first of three weddings scheduled for that time, and Min easily outshone any of the other brides, one of whom had red hair, even if Min did say it herself.

Red fell down getting into a pew and dragged little Tucker down with him, and then broke the prayer-book stand with his weight, heaving himself up. Tucker hid it under the seat and as every one was busy singing, not many noticed. No charge was made, though for a moment Red had feared there might be.

Somebody who had had a couple of eye-openers pinched Lamey's cornet from the pew behind him and blew a loud note, which naturally made every one look around, and the bloke that pinched it and blew it got nervous and dropped it on the floor of the aisle and broke the nozzle off.

Lamey told him to wait for him outside and the

bloke offered to have it out then and there. Lamey wanted this, but Red wouldn't let him do it, and then the singing stopped and every one sat down.

Boy and Min both trembled and Min said, "I will" for both of them, which got a round of applause and a laugh from the crew, who had craned their necks to hear their Captain pronounce the awful words and had waited for the words Boy could not speak because he was so nervous.

The Rev. W. F. P. Vane soon restored order by holding up his hand and saying: "Men! Men!" Tucker thought he said "Amen" and repeated it, which got another laugh.

Suddenly, just as the ring was slipping on Min's finger, and Min had started to cry exactly at the spot that she had arranged in her mind that she would, every one started turning around.

Some one had come in aft.

Ma Brent, all dressed up, with Clancey carrying his head done up in a bandage.

Red shouted, "Ei, ei, Clan!"

And some women, not of *The Spray* gang, said, "Sh! Sh!"

Clan and Ma Brent! Blimey! What a day! What ho!

When the Rev. W. F. P. Vane started his few words of address Lamey borrowed a knife and started to mend his cornet for the journey back and was just giving it a little test with his neckerchief stuck in the bell of it, when the parson got

offended and smiled and told everybody to go off and have a good time. He was only saying things about Min what everybody knew, anyway.

The organ started to play lively and Lamey came right out and played the wedding march upon his cornet along with it.

When they were marching down the aisle Min came face to face with Ma Brent, and she felt so good that she grinned, and of all the miracles, Ma, who had her best clothes on, smiled back, which got Min so flustered that she stopped the procession and, starting to cry again, said:

"Come down to *The Spray*, Ma, for a bite."

Ma nodded, and Clan leaned over and slapped Boy upon the back, and grinned one of those old Clancey grins.

Boy jerked his head as much as to say, "Come down," as they were on the march, and Boy had lost his voice again, anyway; and Clancey shouted:

"I'll be there with bells on."

Every one was glad to see Clan, and some of the language in their greeting got them all put out of the church by a bloke dressed in a woman's black skirt and carrying a pole.

Luke was waiting outside. He never went in churches. He said that his church was inside of him! What he meant by that nobody knew; but Luke was crazy anyway.

He was wearing the top hat, which was dirty where some kid had thrown something and knocked it off; but Luke was radiantly happy and fought

with the rest around the new rice bag, where a lot of kids were pinching the rice.

And every one was careful with the rice in the Captain's face, because he was still a bit tender; and Mummie stopped crying and laughed; and Red kissed her and got a round for it, when he lifted her up into the brake where the lads had plotted she should ride back.

Lamey's cornet started up, "Sweet Adeline," by request from Min, and Mummie tore her lavender skirt while sitting down.

In the first cab Boy and Min sat silently, holding each other's hands with their fingers through each other's.

The driver of the brake, who wore a gray bowler, got into an argument with Yuka, the Russian, accusing him of throwing the rest of the rice down his neck. He was wrong. Yuka hadn't thrown anything since . . .

Well, Tucker took the driver's attention away off of that, because he borrowed his whip to hit some kids who were in danger of their lives hanging on the back, and broke it. And so the crew clubbed round to buy a new one.

The driver'd got to have a blooming mast, hadn't he, to get back to the ship with? Red observed.

Back on the ship, the "Beano" (which is London East End for a good time) started for fair.

Dinner on deck, à la Lord Loveaduck on his yacht, as Clancey remarked; and then every one noticed that Clancey was holding off the booze.

He'd gone teetotal! Well, the world was changed.

Min had been saving room for the dinner, so she ate like a bride should eat, and the Captain, or rather Boy, didn't eat because he was watching Min and had an arm around Mummie.

Roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, beans, taters and a last year's Christmas pudding from Mrs. Brisley. Cheese, and beer and whiskey for those who fancied it.

What about that for a menu?

Zeis and Yuka waited, and they were the only two waiters that didn't ever quarrel while the dinner was on.

Ma Brent steamed up over the gang-plank when dinner was nearly over, and Min got up from her pudding, which was just alight because some one had put some brandy on and touched a match to it.

"Welcome, Mrs. Brent," said Minnie, very lady-like.

"Not at all, I'm sure, Mrs. Leyton," said Mrs. Brent.

And then she went and sat beside Clancey, who told every one down his end how prompt Ma Brent could be when he'd wired her for money from the hospital in Leith.

It was all one surprise after another, because when Mr. Hop, who'd never been really sacked or invited, sauntered up and on forward to his quarters, the Captain rose and went after him and walked some way with him.

No one heard what Boy said, but Mr. Hop came back with Boy, who himself filled up a tankard and handed it to the first mate.

Then some one shouted "Speech!" and Mr. Hop raised his tankard seriously and said "Skol!"

There was clapping for some moments, and then he cleared his throat. Mr. Hop was always serious. He was very serious now.

"I love *The Spray*, and 'ere's to 'er, and those good men what man 'er."

He saluted the Captain and his Lady, and Min waved her spoon and said, "'Ear! 'Ear!"

Mr. Hop then sat by Mummie, whose glass was dry.

Clancey started an argument about drink with Red, who had had a couple, and that started the speeches, and good ones, too. Luke's, anyway, was good! all agreed to that. It was:

"Here's to the wondrous women
What's dreamed of by our crew.
May their dreams be
Of men and sea,
And may their dreams come true!"

Good old Luke! Nice old boy! He looked so happy; and every now and again a tear would drop, but not because Marian had gone off and got married; all Luke's girls did that; he told them to. He only had them so that he would have somebody to bring something to, like the others had.

Poor Luke's hat was done in by Clancey doing

a trick with a glass of beer that had been poured out for him and that he didn't want.

And then, when every one was full up, the crew gave the Captain his present.

Red had been selected to present it, but the boys whispered and gave the honor to Mr. Hop at the last minute, and he received the present when it was passed under the table to him.

He hadn't chipped in anything for it, and he remembered that; so he did a nice thing. He pulled off that silver ring that he'd worn since the flood and slipped it into the wedding present, which was a shining silver Dish Cover with:

TO CAPTAIN AND MRS. BOY LEYTON,
FROM THE LADS OF
THE LADY SPRAY

—and then the date.

Mr. Hop said nothing, and Min made a nice little speech of thanks.

"Thank yer, boys. I'll be sailin' with yer now, all the time, see? And yer got a reg'lar shipmate in me, I 'ope. I can darn a bit, and ye can all call me Ma."

Laughter and cheers.

Every one talked and then Clancey sang "Stop Your Tickling Jock," and "Mother Machree" for an encore, which went down very well.

Lamey gave a cornet solo and there was a short dance, very short—what ho!

Red fell over with Mrs. Brisley and Mr. Brisley, who was a good sort, didn't mind a bit.

"She'd plenty o' fat ter fall on," he said.

Then the guests departed and the lads went down to finish up the Beano at The Jolly Sailors.

The Jolly Sailors was well named that night, all right. What ho!

An autumn Sunday evening. Tall ships swayed restfully at docks and down from Lambeth came the sound of evening bells.

Noak's Wharf was silent, as if awed. Gulls arched gracefully down and up. *The Lady Spray* breathed in even contentment, the masts of her sweetheart ship, *The Lion*, in the next berth, cutting sharp shadows across her deck; his arm might have been about her.

Luke leaned back, writing, and Mummie in her new deck-chair sat knitting. Luke's tie fluttered.

"A pretty tie," said Mummie. "Unusual like."

It was the Eton boating tie; but Luke did not tell her so. He just smiled and spoke softly:

"Everything is beautiful, Mummie."

"Lately it has been," said Mummie.

"Love," said Luke softly.

"Love," repeated Mummie. "It is beautiful!"

"It is God!" said Luke.

And Mummie sighed, believing.

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
305 De Neve Drive - Parking Lot 17 • Box 951388
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1388

Return this material to the library from which it was borrowed.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 052 852 1

Univ
S